

DISCOVERY OF SANSKRIT TREASURES

**SOCIETY
AND
CULTURE**

SATYA VRAT SHASTRI

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VOLUME VII

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

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Contents

I. HINDU STUDIES	
1. Hindu Marriage Ceremony	7
2. Hindu Festivals	19
3. Modern Hindu Society	27
II. Guru Gobind Singh—The Apostle of Human Brotherhood	65
III. Indian Culture in the light of Sanskrit Language	68
IV. Śapathas in Ancient Sanskrit Texts: A Material Source For Culture	77
V. Bhoodan the Ancient Concept : Its Application in Modern Socio-economic context	85
VI. HUMAN VALUES: A MIRROR TO INDIAN CULTURE	
1. Satya	91
2. Dharma	99
3. Dāna	108
4. Ācāra or Sadācāra	117
5. Karuṇā	127
6. Paropakāra, Titikṣā (Kṣamā), Udyoga (Udyama), Santoṣa, Śauca, Śīla	140
7. Dhairya	157

8. Cittaśuddhi	163
9. Aucitya	166
10. Audārya (Liberality)	171
VII. प्रागैतिहासिक भारत में जातीय सम्मिश्रण	178
VIII. संस्कृत वाङ्मय में राष्ट्रीय भावना	189

*does / do not
 don / don't*

*the Veda / the Vedas ?
 Pl. follow one*

I. HINDU STUDIES

1

Hindu Marriage Ceremony

It is a characteristic of upper class Hindu society that no individual in it is taken to be already prepared for certain functions in life. He has to be initiated into them. This initiation he has to undergo in a ritual which in the case of some functions is very elaborate and is to be accompanied with the recitation of the Vedic mantras. A priest well-versed in it has to officiate at it. In the earlier period he used to be a good scholar but things have changed now. The ritual, the Karmakāṇḍa, has become a discipline in itself at present and the priests acquiring just the minimum of knowledge and practice of performing the ritual officiate at the ceremonies.

The ritual begins even before the birth of a child and continues intermittently right upto his death. The sacraments, the Saṃskāras, needing ritual number as many as forty, of which sixteen are more prominent. Of these sixteen only five are generally practised now: the Nāmakaraṇa, the Christening or the naming of a child, the Muṇḍana, the tonsure, the Upanayana, the wearing of the sacred thread or the initiation into study, the study of the Veda and through that of other lores; the Vivāha, the marriage and the Antyeṣṭi, the last rites, the funeral.

Before taking up the details of the Hindu marriage ceremony, it would be worthwhile to familiarize oneself with the basic concept underlying the same. Unlike among others, among the Hindus, marriage is not a contract between two parties, man and woman, which could be broken with mutual consent or otherwise. There is nothing like divorce in the sense in which it is understood

in Islam and Christianity. The marriage can only be annulled under very special circumstances which have been spelt out in the *Smṛtis*, the texts on Hindu law. If the husband suffers from an incurable disease or has been absenting himself from home for a long period with no trace of him or takes to renunciation, *Sannyāsa*, can his wife, if she so chooses, remarry. Otherwise, man and woman, once tied in nuptial bond, have to remain so all through their life. They have also to be faithful to each other, each looking to the welfare of the other. That is the scriptural injunction. Not that there have been no deviations, human society constituted as it is, is not a regimented organism. Even the use of the maximum force cannot make it follow a particular course. Yet, the force of scripture and convention plays its own part in minimising the deviations and directing a society to follow a particular course charted out for it which normally it does with certain exceptions.

It may again be worthwhile to trace here in brief the evolution of marriage in Indian history. The *Ṛgvedic* Society emerges with a well established home which could not have been possible in the pre-marital stage of sexual relationship. There is no instance of promiscuity proper in the Vedic literature. The only reference to it is in the *Mahābhārata*.¹ There it is stated that women were in the earlier times free. The custom of marriage was started by *Śvetaketu*, the son of *Uddālaka*, who abolished the earlier practice, as stated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.²

Since there is no other reference to this nature of marriage in the *Ṛgvedic* times, a reference to the *Purūravas-Urvaśī* type of marriage³ must be supposed to pertain to very ancient times when temporary marriages might have taken place.

A point to be noted before proceeding on with the ritual part of the Hindu marriage is that there is no one stereotyped form of marriage. The scriptures, the *Smṛtis*, accept as many as eight forms of it; the *Brāhma* the *Daiva*, the *Ārṣa*, the *Prājāpatya*, the *Asura*, the *Gāndhārva*, the *Rākṣasa* and the *Paiśāca*. The *Smṛtis* have divided the eight forms into two categories of approved, *prāśasta* and disapproved, *apraśasta*. The first four are of the

praśasta category and the last four of the *apraśasta* one. Of the *praśasta* too it was the first, the Brāhma which was considered the best.

Of the eight forms in the ascending order was Paiśāca, the fraudulent possession of the person of the girl, the Rākṣasa, the forcible capture of the girl while crying or weeping, the Gāndharva, the selection by the bride of the husband for herself, Asura the acceptance of the bride out of free will by the husband after having paid money to her or to her relations, the Prājāpatya the giving away of the daughter by the father to a suiter on the understanding that they should both perform their religious duties together, the Arsha the acceptance by the father of the bride a pair of kine or two for the uses prescribed by law, e.g., the performance of some sacrifice from the 'bridegroom', the Daiva the gifting away of a decorated girl in the form of Dakṣiṇā, the fee at a sacrifice commenced by him, the Brāhma, the giving away of the daughter by the father with such ornaments as he could afford to a man of character and learning who is invited by him voluntarily and received respectfully without taking anything in return. Of all the forms of marriage it is the Brāhma which is considered the purest and the fittest. Most of the rest were social perversities which can go with any society.

At present there is only one form of marriage, the Brāhma, which is prevalent. In some communities the Asura form of marriage in the shape of acceptance of the money by the father of the bride from the bridegroom may also be present. One thing that has to be noticed here is that whatever the form of marriage, even the most detestable one of capturing the girl by force, the Rākṣasa form, it cannot be said to have been solemnized unless it is performed in the presence of fire to the accompaniment of the prescribed rites.

The marriage has to be in the same caste but outside the same Gotra, clan. the inter-caste marriages did take place. They were only tolerated but not encouraged. An elaborate ritual accompanies the marriage. A description of it in brief would be worthwhile in bringing to light the thinking that characterizes it,

the thinking that shows the highly elevating spirit in which it was conceived.

The rituals in the marriage ceremony can be broadly divided into three :

- (i) Kanyā-dāna, i.e. giving away the daughter.
- (ii) Lājā-homa, i.e. offering of lājās, parched rice, in sacrificial fire.
- (iii) Sapta-padī, i.e. the seven steps around the sacrificial fire.

These three rituals have reference to three persons in the bridal home. Kanyā-dāna is performed by the parents of the bride, the Lājā-homa by the brother of the bride, the Sapta-padī by the bride herself. The parents of the girl by their act of Kanyā-dāna propose the marriage, the brothers by offering Lājā-homa second the proposal while the girl by performing the Sapta-padī, supports the proposal. The relatives of both sides, the friends and the wise men present by offering and showering of flowers endorse and complete the formalities and requirements of a valid marriage. In such a marriage there is no necessity of any written record. The main witness is the fire/god Agni who sanctifies it. The other witnesses are the people present. Nothing further is needed for the proof of marriage.

Marriage Ceremony

Gods first are invoked and propitiated by means of Vedic mantras. They (the Gods) are requested to grace the occasion by their auspicious presence and become witnesses. Then the bridegroom is honoured by offering of Madhuparka which represents the greatest form of honour in Indian tradition. Then he is offered a seat, water for washing feet and for ācamana (three sips), a pair of clothes and a cow. This depicts the climax of faith of the bride's father in God. In offering the soul in the form of his daughter to the other family the father seeks the refuge of God. Accordingly, acting on the injunction of the śāstras, he accepts the bridegroom as (a representative of) God and submits:

'O Great God, Thou have appeared in my home in the form of the bridegroom. This girl in the form of Lakṣmī is thy trust.

She is your own and I offer her unto thee. With these feelings I entrust her unto thy holy hands, pray, accept her'.

The bridegroom eulogizes the things offered by the father of the bride and expresses his gratitude by placing the offered flowers, fruits etc. on his head. In other words, the God in the form of the bridegroom expresses his gratification at the devotion of the bride's father and assures him that he would always respect Lakṣmī in the form of his bride.

The bridegroom takes only a small part of the Madhuparka preparation. He, thereby, fulfils the R̥gvedic injunction: *kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī*⁴ and the saying of the Gītā, *bhuñjate tvagham pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt*⁵; according to which he who eats alone, is a great sinner for he eats an accursed food. He expresses his resolve that in future he shall not eat alone. The Madhuparka is made up of ghee, honey and curd. Ghee and honey when mixed in equal proportion turn into poison. Accordingly, in preparing Madhuparka, ghee, honey and curd are mixed in the ratio of 1 : 2 : 4. Utility of ghee, honey and curd is described in highest terms in the Vedas : *āyur vai ghṛtam*⁶, ghee is verily the long life. Honey as body builder is also praised in ancient texts. Āyurveda considers curd as the best form of food. The Madhuparka sanctified by the Vedic *mantras*, is energy-giving and is the best drink. In Vedas ghee is also described as *sneha* (love). It follows that the love of husband and wife should be as uncorruptible as ghee. The speech of the husband and wife should be as sweet as honey and their thoughts and mind towards each other as pure and clear as curd.

The father of the bride offers four pieces of clothes to the bride-groom. Of these four, the bridegroom hands over two to the bride. This indicates that in future the husband will offer one-half of whatever he obtains to his wife. In asking the bride to wear the two pieces of clothes offered by him, the bridegroom prays in the words of the *mantras* that his bride may wear clothes up to a very old age. May she be endowed with wealth, sons and prosperity. May she live a long life and save him from sins. After the body garments are worn, the bride is asked to wear the head

garment. At that time the bridegroom says: "The fortunate ladies who have spun and woven it have blessed the bride with long and auspicious life". The remaining two pieces of clothes are worn by the bridegroom with the recital of the Vedic prayers to Indra, Bṛhaspati and gods of the earth and heavens that he may become wealthy, prosperous and long-lived.

(i) Kanyā-Dāna

After the new clothes are worn, the parents of the bride tie the edges of the clothes into a knot and the father taking in his hand the conch, sandalwood, flowers, rice, fruits and water makes a resolve to give the girl in marriage. At that time the family priests of both sides recount the nobility and loftiness of the family of each side, mentioning the names of ancestors, their Vedic pedigree, their Gotras etc. and offer their blessings by reciting benedictory praises and hymns. The father of the girl hands over the duty of the protection of the girl to the bridegroom. This is a sort of transfer. Amidst the chanting of Vedic *mantras*, the girl's father by sounding the conch proclaims his purity and integrity. He indicates his large-heartedness through sandalwood and his humility, love and faith through leaves and flowers. The bridegroom desiring the welfare of the parents of the bride by chanting Vedic *mantras* expresses his devotion to God and his own humility for there is none in the world who gives or accepts. It is God's will alone which accomplishes such a good deed. Reciting the Vedic *mantras* he prays that by the subtle influence of the air which sanctifies all the quarters the mind of the bride should follow that of his own and that her soothing sight be beneficial both to himself and to his cattle. She should always remain cheerful. She may become mother of valiant sons and be the source of happiness to everybody in her husband's home.

(ii) Lājā - Homa (a)

Marriage is not complete with Kanyā-dāna alone. Before the Lājā-homa, the bridegroom by means of daily sacrificial *mantras*

offers oblations of *ghee* to the fire and completes the three sacrifices i.e., Rāṣṭrabhr̥ta for the prosperity of the country, Jaya-homa for victory and Abhyaṭana for the vanquishing of the enemies. He then offers five special oblations in fire for his own long life and that of the bride and their future progeny. After the Kanyā-dāna the feeling may arise in the mind of the bride that both she and her brothers have been born in the same house and both have equal rights, then why is it that she alone is being sent to another family. To unburden her mind of this feeling the brothers give to their sister the lājās (parched rice) for offering in the fire. The idea is to show that just as paddy plants are transplanted from their original places to other places for proper growth of the crop, so also the girls have to be married and transplanted to other families. By filling the hands of their sister with lājās the brothers assure her that whenever she will go from her father's home to her husband's home, they will provide her plenty of money and articles. Even now it is considered inauspicious for a married woman to go empty-handed from her father's house to her husband's house.

With these feelings the bride with a pleased mind offers three oblations of the lājās, parched rice, in the fire through her husband and recites the following three *mantras*:

*aryyamaṇam devaṁ kanyā agnim ayakṣata, sa no ariyamā
devaḥ preto muñcatu, mā pateḥi
iyam nāryy upabrūte lājān āvapantikā, āyusmān astu me
patir edhantām jñātayo mama
imān lājān āvapāmy agnaus samṛddhikaraṇam tava, mama
tubhyaṁ ca samivananam tad agnir anumanyatām iyam*⁷

The significance of the first *mantra* is that the bride has propitiated god Aryamā and that as she is going away from her father's home to her husband's home, God Aryamā may not separate her from her husband's home. In the second *mantra* she seeks the benedictions of her brothers and relatives for the long life of her husband and in turn wishes them alround prosperity. In the third *mantra* addressing her husband she says, "Lord, by offering the oblations of lājās in the fire I pray to God that our

mutual love should always remain strong and firm.” There is a deep significance in the act of the bride in not offering the *lājās* given by her brothers in the fire herself but through her husband. Just as at the time of sowing of paddy, the seed without the husk (outer cover) and the husk without the seed has no utility, similarly, in the domestic life the husband without the wife and the wife without the husband has no meaning. Both have to act in concert.

Pāṇigrahaṇa (b)

The bridegroom with a happy heart then takes the hand of the bride into that of his and assures her:

*grbhṇāmi te saubhagatvāya hastam mayā patyā jaradaṣṭir
yathāsaḥ | Bhago aryyamā savitā purandhir mahyam tvādur
gārhapatyāya devāḥ |*⁸
*amoham asmi sā tvam, sā tvam
asmy amo aham, sāmāham asmi ṛk tvam, dyaaur aham
prthivī tvam |*⁹
*paśyema śaradaḥ śatam jīvema śaradaḥ śatam śṛṇuyāma
śaradaḥ śatam |*¹⁰

“Goddess, I hold your right hand in my right one for all times to come. May we live together upto old age. Auspicious gods Bhaga, Aryamā, Savitṛ and Purandhi have made you the mistress of my house. If I am the breath, you are the speech, but if you are the speech, I am the breath. If I am *Sāmaveda*, you are *Rgveda*. I am the heaven and you are the earth. (Loving each other) may we see for hundred years, live for hundred years and hear for hundred years.”

This is followed by the ceremony of Sparśa, touching. The husband touches the heart of the bride reaching over her right shoulder with the words:

*mama vrate te hṛdayam dadhāmi
mama cittam anucittam te astu |*¹¹

“Into my will I take thy heart; thy mind shall dwell in my mind.”

In the Vedas, the right hand is called pāṇi, because with it are performed all the religious acts and such other acts as worship, charity, dakṣiṇā, etc. Grasping of the both the right hands is called Pāṇigrahaṇa. Mutual and lasting love between husband and wife during married life and observing dharma are the high ideals of Pāṇigrahaṇa.

The highest aim of husband and wife is attainment of salvation by repaying the three debts, the R̥ṣi R̥ṇa, the Deva R̥ṇa and the Pitṛ R̥ṇa (i.e. debt to the sages, the gods and the ancestors). The debt to the sages is repayed by the study of the Vedas and the śāstras and also by acquisition of true knowledge; the debt to gods is repayed by the performance of sacrifices (yajñas) and the debt to ancestors is repayed by giving birth to noble progeny.

The bridegroom and the bride then go round the fire four times. In the first three rounds the bride leads and in the fourth one the bridegroom leads. According to Vedic lore attainment of dharma (duty); artha (wealth); kāma (desires) and mokṣa (liberation, i.e. salvation from birth and death) is the aim of life. The bride takes up the responsibility of observing dharma and so she leads. As dharma cannot be attained without artha (wealth) the bride comes forward again in the second round for proper utilization of wealth. In the third round the bride again leads, as, for the proper rearing of progeny it is the wife who has to shoulder the main responsibility. In the three rounds she offers lājās in the fire, grasps the right hand of the husband and steps on the stone. It is on the direction of the bridegroom that she does that. The bridegroom says, "from today onward you may have to face many obstacles and difficulties but you should crush all of them and trample under your feet all those who act as your enemies. You have to remain as firm and steadfast as this stone. In no case have you to falter". Another significance of stepping over the stone is that the path of the married life is difficult to tread. The bridegroom assures the bride that he will fully cooperate with her facing all those difficulties which come in their way. After the third round the bride says that she has taken upon herself the responsibility for dharma, artha and kāma and asks:

“Who will take up the responsibility of leading them to salvation i.e. mokṣa?”

Then the bridegroom comes forward and leads in the fourth round. In this round there is no chanting of the *mantras*. Silence and one-pointedness are the keys of spiritualism which require introversion.

(iii) Sapta-padī

The *śāstras* do not consider marriage as valid even after the brothers have offered the Lājā-homa. Only Sapta-padī completes the marriage ceremony. The consent of the bride is necessary for the completion of the marriage and that is evidenced when they perform the Sapta-padī.

Amidst the chanting of the Vedic *mantras* the bride and the bridegroom walk seven steps before the sacred fire in the presence of the gods, the wise people and the relatives making solemn resolves. This is in consonance with the famous edict, ‘seven steps taken together create friendship’. This is the final step in the completion of a valid and legal marriage. At the instance of the bride, the bridegroom takes vows for shouldering responsibility for the provision of food, clothes, strength, wealth, happiness, cattle and other articles necessary in different seasons. These vows he takes in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth steps one after the other and prays to Lord Viṣṇu to grant him strength to fulfil these vows. He addresses the bride as Anna-pūrṇā, Durgā, Lakṣmī, Sukhavarṣā, Prajāvatnī and Ṛtuvarṣā. In the seventh step the bridegroom tells the bride : “Come along. Now we are friends to travel this life’s journey. Let our love be lasting. As husband and wife let us march on in the service and for the protection of the country, community and dharma, in addition to the service of our parents and relatives. Thus like the two wheels of a chariot, the husband and wife solemnly resolve to shoulder the responsibility of married life and become one in spirit, and pray as under:

“I have your heart’s support. May your mind follow my mind. May my thoughts and speech be as yours. May God unite me and

you firmly in bonds of love for ever."

After the Sapta-padī the bride sits on the left side of the bridegroom as ardhāṅginī or vāmāṅgī. At the time of marriage and occasions like vrata, fast and charity (dāna) as also during the rituals of Puṁsavana (a ceremony performed in the third month of gestation), Sīmanta (a ceremony performed by women in months of pregnancy), parting of the hair and in the course of the yajñas (sacrifices), etc. wife as a religious partner always sits on the right side of the husband. According to śāstras the right side of man and the left side of woman are considered pure. The right hand of man and the left one of that of woman can in conjunction do all good deeds. On all other occasions such as in chariots, wife is to sit on the left side.

The seven steps, the Sapta-padī, are indicative of the seven Lokas - Bhū, Bhuvah, etc., seven seers (Ṛṣis), seven sounds of music (Sapta-svaras), seven Pātālas (Sapta-pātālas), seven rays of the sun (Sapta-raśmis), seven colours (Sapta-varṇas), seven corns (Sapta-dhānyas), seven metals (Sapta-dhātus), seven continents (Sapta-dvīpas), seven mountains (Sapta-parvatas). Then the bridegroom applies sindūra, red powder, in the sīmanta, the parting of the hair of the bride. While applying the powder, the bridegroom prays: May the bride always be auspicious:

sumaṅgalīr iyaṁ vadhūr imāṁ sameta paśyata

and asks the persons present to bless her before departing:

*saubhāgyam asyai dattvāyāthāstaṁ vi paretana.*¹¹

In the end the bridegroom, showing the Polar-star (Dhruva-nakṣatra) to the bride and exhorting her to follow steadfastly the family tradition chants the following *mantra*:

*ihaiva staṁ mā vi yauṣṭaṁ viśvam āyur vyaśnutam |
krīṇantau putrair naptṛbhir modamānau sve gṛhe*¹²

"Be you here itself. May there be no separation. May you attain full span of life playing with children and grandchildren making merry in your home".

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Hindu Festivals

I

SPRING FESTIVAL

The culture of Hindus has from ancient days inculcated a joyous attitude on life. Their deep faith in the creed of sunshine and joy had found due expression in the observance of some very charming festivals which are found to punctuate the course of the Hindu calendar through the year. A systematic study of these festivals as regards their nature and extent in time and place will prove of great interest and deserves to be taken up to unfold the positive side of Indian culture.

All along the Indian tradition the spring season has been spoken of as the king of all seasons (Ṛturāja). Poets and playwrights have spared no pains to describe its glory and grandeur. But the description of the spring festival is confined to a few works only. A careful perusal of these would yield an account of the festival as it was observed in days of yore.

The festival of spring or the Vasanta Pañcamī is to this day celebrated with great eclat in this country. As with every festival the original form of this festival too had been quite different from what it is today. To trace the history of the festival is by no means easy. In the words of P.K. Gode, "at present our knowledge of the history of festivals is rather nebulous. We cannot say when a particular festival originated and how it developed through centuries of our cultural history. Mere descriptions of the present-

day festivals, howsoever enchanting, do not prove their antiquity as these descriptions are a mixture of legends and hearsay evidence with many regional variations, from which it is difficult to comprehend the origin and development of these festivals¹". As a matter of fact, no complete systematic history of the Hindu festivals is available at present.

In spite of all these difficulties an effort is being made here to trace the history of the spring festival, for it is of absorbing interest. It is expected that this study may prove useful in discovering the thought-processes that were responsible in changing the shape and form of the festival through the ages.

The Vasanta festival coinciding with the fifth day in the bright half of the month of Māgha seems to be one of great antiquity and of country-wide prevalence. It is still observed with due preparation in the Dakṣiṇāpatha and the Uttarāpatha. The *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana mentions it as "suvasantaka" which is explained as a festival dedicated to the worship and propitiation of God of Love. The *Kāmasūtra* observes 'that the citizens indulged on this day in sports involving dance and music, both oral and instrumental'.²

From *Ratnāvalī*³ a Sanskrit drama by Śrī Harṣa we form quite a clear idea of the festivities connected with the spring festival. In ancient India there used to be big gardens full of beautiful flowers and trees. Beneath a tree was installed the image of Kāma, the God of Love with a bow in hand. Prominent ladies of the town said prayers and offered flowers and unguents to the deity. The whole town bore a festive look. Merry crowds in holiday mood filled all available space in the gardens on the outskirts of the towns and cities. There is recorded evidence to show that on this occasion people indulged in drinking bouts too. Society girls sang and danced till late in the evening when the moon spread its silvery sheet on everybody. There was joy and mirth all through. People celebrated the festival with a spirit of abandon which sometimes reached undignified limits. *Bāṇa* records an incident where a pious old man was made to marry an old woman on a

broken cot. This incident is typical of the mentality of the Indian crowd which has not changed much since olden times.

Spring or Holi Festival

It is just possible that in its origin the spring festival was connected with all that now forms part of the Holi festival. The following description of the spring festival by Basham, an authority on ancient Indian history, is worthy of note. "The most popular festival in early times was the Festival of Spring, in honour of Kāma, the Love-God, who, though he played only a small part in the thought of the theologians, was evidently a very popular divinity. At this festival even respectable citizens forgot their caste restrictions, and paraded the streets scattering red powder over their neighbours squirting them with coloured water and playing all kinds of practical jokes. The festival still survives under the name of Holi though the Love-God now plays no part in it. It is clearly the survival of a primitive fertility ceremony, but even at its earliest appearance the grim significance of the red powder seems to have been lost, and it was a sort of Hindu saturnalia, a time of universal merry-making and licence of all kinds.⁴"

As for the Vasanta festival as part of the South Indian culture, we have a reference in the Jivakacintāmaṇi of Tiruttakadeva, which dealing with the Purāṇic story of Jivaka is the greatest existing Tamil literary monument. This great romantic epic which is at once the Illiad and Odyssey of the Tamil language is said to have belonged to the Tamil Academy or Sangam at Madura and to have antedated Kamban, the author of the great Tamil Rāmāyaṇa. The work is divided into Lambakas or chapters, the first beginning with the birth of the hero and the last ending with his Nirvāṇa. We meet with a reference to the celebration of the Vasanta festival in the fourth Lambaka entitled Guṇamalalyar. On this day some young men and women of the city went to an adjoining park for play and enjoyment. Among these were two young ladies Suramañjarī and Guṇamālā. Between them there arose a discussion as to the quality of the fragrant powder used

for the purpose of bathing. Each claimed her powder to be superior. The matter was referred to the wise youth Jivaka who gave a verdict in favour of Guṇamālā. Hearing the verdict Suramañjarī was sorrow-struck and decided to shut herself in Kanyāmada with a vow that she would never see a man's face till this very Jivaka would come begging for her hand in marriage. While Suramañjarī desisted from taking part in the Vasanta festival Guṇamālā encouraged by the verdict in her favour went out to enjoy the festival.

II

DĪPĀVALI FESTIVAL

Dīpāvali (Diwali) or the Festival of Lights has been celebrated in India for thousands of years. The beautiful array of lights has feasted the eyes and gladdened the hearts of every Indian since times immemorial. According to tradition this is the festival of the Vaiśyas which in course of time has been adopted by other communities also. As to when and how this festival had its origin nobody can say anything with any amount of certainty. There are varying versions of its origin found in ancient literature. From a careful study of ancient lore it is possible to gather bits of information regarding the history of this festival. When pieced together they enable a student of history and sociology to work out the processes that made the festival what it is today. Although Diwali has become a national festival now, the different strands in it are still discernible. The festival means something to a particular community while quite a different thing to a different community. This unity in diversity is ever a matter of deeper significance. It can be apprehended only if the history and the development of this festival is traced. The rich overgrowth of stories and legends is no doubt a hindrance to it. Still, it is worthwhile to make an attempt.

According to some scholars like B.G. Tilak, the origin of Diwali has some connections with the movement of the earth

round the sun. The sun passes the Tulā or Libra about this time and marks the second half of its course. This luminary goes farther and farther from the northern hemisphere. It is natural for the people to desire at this time the speedy return of the sun to enliven the northern portion of the hemisphere. It is this desire which is expressed in all the ceremonies connected with the Dipāvali. dīpas or lamps are the symbols of light. Light is used to invite light.

According to another school of thought the night of the Pitṛs begins about this time. On this occasion lamps are lit on a pole to serve as guides to other souls. Śrāddhas are also performed on the dark night of Amāvasyā which is the main Diwali festival.

As a matter of fact, Diwali is not one festival. It is a string of festivals woven together to enliven and gladden the hearts of the Indians. The main festival is of course Dipāvali, which is observed on the darkest day of the dark fortnight. It is on this day that every Hindu home is illuminated with beautiful twinkling little dīpas. This festival is observed to commemorate the victory of Viṣṇu over King Bali and the release of Lakṣmī and other gods from the captivity of the demon lord. When they are freed, they return to Kṣīrasāgara (Milk Ocean) and enjoy sound sleep.

The day preceding Dipāvali day is known as Naraka Caturdaśī which is the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight when the sun is in the Libra (Tulā Rāśi). On that day Mahā Viṣṇu destroyed the demon Narakāśura who harassed the world in the conceit of his strength and power. When Narakāśura's mother heard of the death of her son, she did not allow herself to be overwhelmed with grief. She quickly overcame her sorrow and felt happy over her son's great good fortune that he met his fate at the hands of Mahā Viṣṇu Himself. Seeing how happy the people of the world were, she too felt happy even though the happiness of the people was due to the death of her own son. So she prayed to God that the anniversary of her son's death be known thenceforward as Naraka Caturdaśī which should be observed every year for all time by the people of the land as a festival day in every house when the old and the young men and women should spend it, after

auspicious oil bath before dawn in an environment of cheer and happiness. According to another version of the story, Narakāśura is himself said to have asked for the boon at the time of his death. The popular form of celebrating Diwali with an array of lights is connected with the celebration of this anniversary when every heart felt relieved at the passing away of an evil spirit in the form of Narakāśura.

The philosophical significance of the festival as it is understood is that it signifies the removal of the darkness of Avidyā, ignorance, in the recesses of the human mind by the Vidyā, true knowledge. This day is associated with the earnest prayer of a devotee of God who considered the happiness of the world more important than his own personal sorrow. It also emphasises the truth that what is ordinarily considered as human suffering is really a benefit in the divine scheme of human welfare. Narakāśura's mother deserved to be honoured to have understood it in proper light. That is why the festival of lights is observed year after year in this land.

The Diwali festival is spread over four days. After Naraka Caturdaśī, we have the Lakṣmī Pūjana day when devotees offer prayers to Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth. A legend connected with the Lakṣmī Pūjana day is very interesting. A king has four daughters from each of whom he enquires as to whom they owe their prosperity. All of them, except the fourth flatter the king by saying that they owe their prosperity to him (father). The fourth one, however, says that it is due to God. The arrogant king, therefore, gets enraged, marries her to a Brahmin and exiles the couple who go to a forest in a neighbouring State. The Brahmin depends upon alms to support himself and his wife. One day he does not get any alms but cannot return home empty-handed for fear of disobeying his wife who had given definite instructions to the contrary. He on his way back home sees a dead snake. He picks it up and brings it home. His wife keeps it outside her hut. It so happens that an eagle takes it up and drops the necklace of the king of the country which it had picked up earlier while the king was taking his bath in a river. The wife of the Brahmin at

once takes possession of the necklace. In the meantime the king announces prize for the recovery of the jewellery. The wife asks the Brahmin to go to the king, return the necklace and ask for a peculiar boon which is that the king should forbid lighting all buildings, including the royal palace, with the exception of their own house. The king grants the boon. On the Amāvasyā night Goddess Lakṣmī comes out in her Vāhana on her annual visit. Seeing the only light in the couple's house she enters it and sees the couple offering oblations to her. She is immensely pleased at this. She gives her blessings to the couple which transform them into king and queen.

On the Lakṣmī Pūjā Day white bed is prepared for Lakṣmī on which she is represented as sleeping. Her image is known as 'Sukhasuptikā' (pleasantly sleeping Lakṣmī).

The third in the chain of festivals is known as Balirāja. According to popular tradition Viṣṇu pleased with the generosity of King Bali gave him the boon that the first day of the bright fortnight of Kārtika will be known as Balirāja Day. This Balirāja festival coincides with the Govardhanotsava or the Annakūṭa. Before the birth of Kṛṣṇa the cowherds of Gokula used to worship Indra but Kṛṣṇa asked them to worship Govardhana mountain for it provided them with grass. At this Indra became angry and sent incessant showers. Kṛṣṇa lifted the Govardhana mountain and protected the cowherds for seven days. Since then the cowherds began to worship Govardhana. In some parts of India people still make a cowdung picture of mount Govardhana on which they place the clay image of Kṛṣṇa.

Next festival is known as the Yamaditiyā. According to Purāṇic legends Yamunā, the sister of Yama, invited Yama, her brother, at her house and served him with the best dishes. Yama was pleased. He gave a boon to Yamunā that who would dine at her house on the second day of the bright fortnight of Kārtika would not see the gate of Yama's city.

This is the brief description of the festivals or ceremonies connected with Diwali. They are a standing monument to the assimilating nature of our ancient forbears.

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Modern Hindu Society

The identity of society is determined by its basic features. In the case of the Hindu society these features have been the belief in the theory of Karman and that of rebirth, Punarjanman, a corollary to the former which means reaping the reward of actions, good or bad of previous birth/births. The cycle of birth and rebirth continues till the true knowledge in the form of the identity of the individual soul, the Jīvātman, with the supreme one, the Paramātman dawns. Except the Materialists known as Cārvākas or Lokāyatikas, every school and every sect of Hindu society has belief in Karman and rebirth. Not only the Hindus, even as of the other religions as had their origin in India as reform movements, the religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and so on have absolute faith in them. At the social plane, the caste system and the system of the stages of life, the Varnāśramadharma, have been the essential characteristics of Hindu society which was divided into four groups of Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras in the descending order. The Brāhmaṇas formed the intellectuals, the Kṣatriyas the warriors, the Vaiśyas the merchants and traders and the Śūdras the various other professions. In course of time this division primarily conceived on the basis of type of work and activity to be performed by each came to be determined by birth, the real control vesting with the first three upper groups, the last group having been assigned the lowest position and being totally neglected and looked down upon. Among the three groups the Brahmin with his knowledge of scriptures and lores occupied the

dominant position. A challenge was thrown to this by a long line of reformers down the ages, with their own set of ideas which were accepted by their followers as new religions and named after them, Buddhism: for example, after the Buddha and Jainism after Jina Mahāvīra. The reformers in their own way continued trying to demolish the caste barriers, the barriers of high and low with only limited success which not unoften resulted in their followers forming break away groups, leaving the core of the Hindu society continue with the system wherein a large segment of it for no reason except its birth in a particular group was considered untouchable and unfit for anything decent in life and was condemned to a living deprived of facilities available to the members of the other three groups.

The special prerogative of the Brahmins, the ritual, too held society in its firm grip and assured for its performers a special position. The protest movements aimed at loosening its grip but without much spectacular success.

Women who were equal partners in society and shared the same altar with their husbands even in the performances of the sacrifice in the Vedic period and who joined in the highly philosophical discussions in the period of the Upaniṣads came to occupy much lower position in the society later.¹ They were denied the study of the scriptures: *strīśūdrau nādhīyātām*, the women and the Śūdra, must not read them, and till the beginning of the present century even the formal education. From the ancient to the medieval and from the medieval to the early modern period the position of women is a saga of progressive deterioration. There was and in some cases still is, the practice of the Sati, the burning of the widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands and the lack of education. Though there is nothing of this type in older texts, the children at a very tender age came to be united in wedlock in the late medieval and the early modern period, with all the attendant social evils. If perchance the husband died, the child wife would have to carry on with her widowhood all her life, a life of all misery and privation. The widowhood for the women was the greatest curse. They could not remarry and were

condemned to a life severe and rigorous. They had to shave their heads, sleep on floor, eat frugal meals and wear white clothes. Their very sight was considered inauspicious in weddings and other auspicious occasions.

That was the position of the Hindu society till about the middle of the nineteenth century which provided to its observer a very dismal picture, the picture of a society which through its onward march through history had absorbed into it, in spite of its high philosophy and the most elevating of the thoughts of oneness of all living beings, some of the evils which it was not prepared to shed, the evils which were eating into its vitals and emasculating it. The sap of life which had once made it pulsate and throb with inhalation of fresh breath in the ancient and the early medieval periods, the breath which had made it a very free society, where women would go out to meet their lovers all alone in the night as described by Kālidāsa, where a wife like Avantisundarī would offer her critical comments on the works of a great poet like Rājaśekhara, seemed to be running out. The Muslims and the Christian Missionaries taking advantage of the weakness of the Hindu society were getting active in converting Hindus to Islam and Christianity. There were anxious moments around. In those moments there arose among the Hindus crusaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1883) who persuaded the then British Govt. to ban the hideous custom of Sati, Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) who advocated widow remarriage and the reconversion of the people from Islam and Christianity to Hinduism, the Śuddhi movement as also women's education and carried on a relentless war against idolatory and ritualism while re-establishing the authority of the Vedas against that of the Purāṇic cults, Maharshi Karve (1858-1910) a strong advocate of widow re-marriage of which he himself provided an example by marrying a Brahmin widow in the city of Poona, the citadel of orthodoxy in Maharashtra and a pioneer of women's education in Modern India, the founder of women's University, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) who preached against caste system and the habit of drinking while advocating the rural upliftment of which,

he took the spinning wheel as the symbol, Rama Krishna Paramhansa (1834-1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) who with their order of the Sannyāsins, Rama Krishna Mission Ashrama took to serving the poor and the down[trodden by setting up dispensaries, orphanages, schools, libraries and so on meeting the Christian Missionaries thus on their own ground and advocating the Vedāntic teaching of equality of all beings while emphasizing the nobler aspects of Hinduism weaning away in that manner the people from Islam and Christianity and a host of others like Ranade (1842-1900), Gokhale (1866-1915), Tilak (1856-1920) and so on, who were strong advocates of reform in Hindu society. In Bengal the movements like the Brahmōsamāja and Prārthanāsamāja started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen and in Punjab, the Arya Samāja founded by Swami Dayanand, did useful work in bringing out awakening in Hindu society against the evils, it had been suffering from and also infused a new spirit of confidence in its glorious heritage and its equally glorious future.

Then there were saints like Tuka Ram in Maharashtra, Shankardeva in Assam, Chaitanya in Bengal, Nanak and other Gurus in Punjab, Kabir in Uttar Pradesh, who had expressed themselves earlier against caste system and emphasized equal treatment to all beings. The cumulative effect of the social reformers of the nineteenth century and the religious preachers earlier did provide a shake-up to Hindu society, which got a further fillip through the scientific and technological knowledge. Added to this was the exposure to the world outside. Under the cumulative impact of all the three, the social reform movements, the scientific age and the exposure to the outside world the modern Hindu society with all its tight grip of tradition and history of thousands of years could not but admit of some change to bring it in line to a certain extent with the spirit of the time preserving at the same time its essentials. Fresh wind is noticeable in it now. No honest observer can find it the same old decadent society it was in the last century. It has new-found confidence in

it. Tradition, though still powerful, has its grip on it loosened perceptibly. With the coming in of the British the Hindus took to modern education in a big way in contrast to their Muslim brethren who remained backward educationally and are still so.

Women's education which was once almost non-existent or was limited to the upper castes only and there too to learning certain skills and arts, is so wide-spread now that it has belied all expectations. Apart from an all women's university, the S.N.D.T. University in Mumbai which was started by Maharshi Karve, as pointed out earlier in Poona in 1916 and which was the first free University in India in the sense that it did not receive any financial grant from the government, has now more than 5000 students on its rolls in its various faculties of Arts, Commerce and Science. Besides, there are hundreds of Women's colleges all over the country. Apart from the exclusively women's colleges, which are now fast becoming outdated, women students study in large numbers in co-educational institutions. At present the position is that of all the school-, college- and university-going students a fairly large proportion is that of girls and they are making top grades in them. No longer are some special areas like science and technology the chosen preserve of the boys. The girls have made inroads into them and successfully so. It is common sight to see girls working in laboratories side by side with boys and discussing problems of such sophisticated nature as Nuclear Physics or Computer Science. The old taboo of women joining certain professions is also no longer there. There are women lawyers, women beaurocrats, women business executives, women financiers and bankers, women pilots, women politicians and so on. The Hindu tradition of the wives of the family not working outside their homes along with other men, does no longer stand in their way now.

Child marriages are at a discount now. The statutory age of marriage for the boys is 21 and for the girls 18, which is generally adhered to in urban areas. The only exceptions are the rural areas of some of the more traditional of the Indian States like Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The position of widows too is not as bad at present as it once used to be. They are not the hated lot now even among the uneducated or less educated. Among the educated the social stigma is as good as gone. To be truthful one cannot deny that in spite of all the progress in women's education and social status, women still do not enjoy, thanks to tight hold of tradition, absolute equality with men. Hindu society does discriminate against them. While the birth of a boy in it is an occasion for jubilation, that of a girl is that of gloom. The pall of gloom is thicker if a female child is followed by many others of her sex. The position is retrieved only with the birth of a male child. This attitude towards the girls has its roots in the past. With no old age security from the State, one had to depend upon the family only. Since the daughters are given away in marriage and are to become part and parcel of different households², the family in the case of the aged parents or other elderly relatives signified only sons and grandsons. Further, due to its esoteric beliefs it is the sons who are authorized to make offerings at the Śrāddha ceremony, the offering to the deceased ancestors. The sons obviously are more useful than the daughters. They are also useful in perpetuating families, a duty cast on the adult male by scriptures: *prajātantuṃ mā vyavacchetsi*³, "do not snap the thread of a family continuity", which he has to fulfil by begetting children repaying thereby the debt to his ancestors, the *pitṛṛṇa*. Again, continuity of a feudal society depended on its ability to protect itself against onslaughts of adversaries as also availability of adequate hands for agro-commercial activities. All this accorded to sons in society a forward position which continues, even with the obsolescence of some of the above considerations, down to the present period. From the very birth girls are viewed as a liability in comparison to boys who are looked as an asset. Because of this, India has one of the lowest of the sex ratios in the world. The low value attached to girls leads to their neglect. In India there are 130 million girls below the age of 20. The majority of these are born into an environment in which they suffer from hunger, disease and ignorance. Their neglect is built-in in the age-old concept of

girls belonging to some one else, their being another's property, *artho hi kanyā parakīya eva*,⁴ as Kālidāsa puts it. From their very inception they are not looked upon as part of the family of their birth. Their going over to another family eventually, after marriage, conditions the entire attitude towards them even at the stage of their upbringing. A Telugu proverb expresses it most effectively: Bringing up a girl is like watering a plant in a neighbour's garden. A Delhi newspaper reported the bizarre behaviour of a Delhi father of two girls, kidnapping one of his own daughters, a three year old girl and abandoning her in Chandigarh.⁵ Even though highly educated and sober, he permitted himself this outrageous act for he was finding it difficult to prepare himself mentally to bring up two daughters, a poignant pointer to the prevailing prejudice in Hindu society against female offspring.

It is this prejudice that is responsible for the practice of female infanticide which continues to the present day, the newspapers carrying reports of it every now and then. In one such published in the Bangkok Post⁶, a reference was made to a survey conducted in the Salem region of Tamilnadu according to which female infanticide touches one family in every two which in addition to prompting district officials to crack down on offending parents has made them install white painted cradles outside 116 hospitals and clinics so that parents who do not want babies could leave them. Mothers come quietly to cradles, deposit their infants and walk away without looking back. 'Nobody stops them or asks questions', said the administrative head of the Salem district. In November and December in 1992, according to the survey, eighteen girls were left in the cradles ranging in age from a few days to a few weeks who were brought up in the government orphanage in Chennai. According to the above-mentioned district administrative head, the families just kill the new-born girls and bury them. When questioned 111 out of 1250 women in 100 randomly chosen villages admitted that they had killed at least one infant, 547 said infanticide had occurred in their families and 837 said that they knew that it was common in their villages.

male / "Even a useless mail buffalo can fetch 100 rupees" said one woman. "A girl child means nothing but expense." The general method of killing the baby girls is choking them with milk mixed with raw grains of rice or giving them the juice of a poisonous herb. It could be strangulation also. According to a report published in *The Times of India* the death of a baby girl delivered in one of Delhi's hospitals fathered by an auto rickshaw driver who already has two daughters carried strangulation marks on her neck.⁷

The female infanticide is assuming a new and more pernicious form of the destruction of the foetus, if it is that of the female child on the basis of the determination of the gender of the child, made possible by science even while in womb. This type of female infanticide has shown an unprecedented rise in Indian cities forcing the authorities to think of measures to prevent by law and other means the pre-natal determination of the sex of the child. For some of the analysts female infanticide boils down to economics. India has an average per capita income of Rs. 18,400.00 per annum with no social security, health insurance and housing. The tradition is—that has yawning breaches in it visible now—that sons support their old parents. In contrast a daughter has to be married off at great expense pretty early. At that point of time her obligations get transferred to her husband and his family. Preference for sons would continue as long as there would be no social security. More than that, the age-old belief is that it is the son who perpetuates the family line and it is he who performs obsequies, the *tarpaṇa*, the *piṇḍadāna* and so on which are so essential for delivering the father and other ancestors—the very etymology of the word *putra*, son is so contrived as to support this: *punnāmno narakād yasmāt trāyate pītaram sutaḥ tasmāt putrāḥ iti proktaḥ svayam eva svayambhuvā* (cf. *Manu.* 9.138), "because he delivers the father from the hell called Put, so he is called *putra* by the self-existent himself". It is only he or other male relative who is authorized according to the *Dharmaśāstra* for the *mukhāgnidāna*, placing of fire on the mouth of the deceased which starts the cremation. It is he again who is

to perform the many of the post-cremation rites like the asthisañcayana, the gathering of the bones from the funeral pyre, the asthipravāha, the floating of the bones in river. There is a social taboo for a daughter or some other female relative performing these rites. Till some time back women could not even accompany the funeral procession to the cremation ground. Their participation in the cremation therefore was out of question. Till they get the acceptability for such practice, the preference for son would continue. For this a quantum change in social thinking is necessary. And till this comes about, would continue preference for boys and discrimination against girls with the more heinous manifestations of it, in the form of female infanticide or the destruction of the female foetus.

There is a village called Jeeda in the district of Bhatinda in Punjab which has acquired the nick name of 'Kudi Mar Pind' (village where female children are killed). This village has abysmally low sex ratio according to 2001 census, 743 females per 1000 males which is lower than that of the entire Malwa region, which is 779 per 1000; an alarmingly low figure itself. Though village elders hotly contest the census figures, village women do concede to the extent that as of them as have two to three daughters go in for pre-natal test and abort the pregnancy if the test shows that the next child is the female. "After all, who wants to listen to mother-in-law's abuses", said one of them.⁸

The destruction of the foetus, if it is that of the female child on the basis of determination of its gender made possible by science, though bad, is carried on clandestinely on a large scale even among educated and affluent families even in metro and other cities proving the point, that it is not poverty and illiteracy alone which drive people to it but also the prospect of large amount of dowry and the insatiable demand for it from prospective grooms and their families which could destroy the future of their daughters leaving them devastated in the process. Society being what it is, a girl child is a source of great and unending worry for the father. An old Sanskrit stanza sums it up most poignantly:

*kanyā prajātā mahatīti cintā
 kasmai pradeyeti mahān vitarkaḥ
 dāttā sukhaṁ prāpsyati vā na veti
 kanyāpitṛtvaṁ bahu nāma kaṣṭam ॥⁹*

“The fact that a daughter is born, is itself a matter of great worry. The worry then turns as to whom she is to be given away in marriage. (The next worry is) whether she would be happy in marriage or not. To be a father of a girl is indeed a great misery”.

The hideous practice of dowry in marriage in Hindu society is one single great factor going against a girl child. The spectre begins to haunt the parents from her very birth. They stretch resources to the maximum to arrange what goes now-a-days by the term ‘decent marriage’, to the extent of incurring heavy loans which they go on repaying for the rest of their life. It is not only the dowry that has to be arranged; it is rich gifts too, the sequence for which starts with just the firming up of the relationship, the *ihākā*, the betrothal, the *maṅganī*, the bangle wearing ceremony and a multiplicity of other big or small rites. Every time the parents of the girls have to shell out gold chains, *saris* and other costly gifts to all sorts of relatives of the bride groom as also to their own, putting severe strain on their resources which in many cases they would have already strained while educating the daughters. Even this, they can somehow stomach but not the harassment their dear daughter, a part of their flesh and blood, has to suffer for bringing insufficient dowry, the dowry not to the expectation of the in-laws or the burgeoning demands even after marriage. The harassment in several cases is total; mental, verbal and physical, all of which leading to extreme steps of bride burning or ending of their life by brides themselves. In a bizarre incident a 52 years old orthopaedic surgeon was charged with four members of his family colluding in torturing and maiming the daughter-in-law and her four years old daughter¹⁰. It was January 2004. The daughter was allegedly severely bitten by her father and even physically abused. The child’s body is so badly injured that she can urinate only through stomach with the help of medical implements. The version of the daughter-in-law is as follows, “I

got married five years ago. At that time my parents had given 1.5 lacs as dowry. For the past few months my father-in-law has been beating me for demanding another 2 lacs. My brother gave Rs. 50,000/- in December 2003. The fateful night of January 2, 2004 I made a mistake of telling my father-in-law that her family was not bound to give them any money. At this my husband bit off chunks of flesh from both my cheeks and when I refused to sign a blank paper, he bit off a part of my index finger. This was to make me realize that post-graduate degree can get a woman nowhere. That night my husband had kept banging my head on the wall and hitting me. My in-laws egged him on. To save myself I went and locked myself in the drawing room. To make me come out they then started torturing my daughter. Her thumb and index finger of one hand have been completely severed. She was hit with a car wiper. Doctors say that her head had been banged so many times that she may end up with permanent brain damage".

There was a report in the newspapers of a 23 year old woman married to a property dealer a few months back forced to consume pesticides¹¹, an incident which was culmination of dowry harassment to which she had been subjected by her in-laws.

With the possibilities of all these horrors staring in the face it is but natural that aversion for the girl child may have come to the built up in the Hindu psyche.

Not that, there have been no protests against the pernicious practice of dowry. Powerful voices have been raised against it by an array of social reformers, but with little effect. The practice persists in all its varied ramifications, giving the people, sometimes on the high with education which was expected otherwise to loosen its grip, providing the fillip. The higher the education or the post, the more the price for the groom. Apart from cash and jewellery or refrigerators or cars, real estate has come to be added to it, plots of land and houses or flats being asked for and given away in dowry. This is in spite of the daughters being highly educated.

With the aversion for the girl child for the reasons explained above, it is but natural that there be fewer girls as compared to

boys, a glaring gender disparity which has led to the appearance of many a new social phenomenon. In the State of Haryana, there being big disparity in sex ratio, many young men not finding bride for themselves in their own community approach the village matron with hefty amounts of money with the request that she arrange for them a bride. The matron condescendingly tries her contacts in other States and brings the bride from other communities who not unoften find themselves unable to adjust to their new surroundings.

In Gujarat it has led to the emergence of a phenomenon of boys with no sister not able to get brides for themselves. As a report goes, more and more boys in the district of Mehsana, notorious for its preference for the male child and lowest sex ratio of 798 girls per 1000 boys not able to find a girl in their community are forced to buy bride from outside and have to cough up large sums of money for that or to remain unmarried. The situation is particularly bad for those who do not have sisters. There is a tradition called Satta Paddhati among the Choudharies, Rabaris and certain Patel and Prajapati communities of marrying brother and sister of one family to the sister and brother of the other family. Boys who do not have sisters would not be getting matches. There are many boys in the Mehasana village who are forced to remain unmarried for they do not have the sisters to exchange in the wedding. The only option for them is to go and buy a wife which has occasioned other problems. Many cases have come to light where the girls brought from outside the communities have left the boys within two to three months of marriage. It is almost like business where parents of a girl start demanding more money or they call their girls back. In one of the instances recounted by a social worker of Mehasana, the newly wedded wife of a youth in Kanoda village left her husband who had paid Rs. 30,000/- to procure her after three months of marriage. The parents of the girl had asked for some gold ornaments in addition to the money. The boy's family obliged. But the girl decamped with the jewellery in a matter of days. In this situation boys have come to be at the receiving end. And all

this due to declining sex ratio which is one of the lowest in Gujarat with 878 girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group. This is indicative of the brewing social crisis in the district of Gujarat where female infanticide is common.¹²

The Hindustan Times in an editorial¹³ recently referred to the phenomenon of the procurement of the brides not only from the different communities of the regions of the same State but also from other States as also from other countries lending the situation international dimension, the full impact of which will be possible to assess only after some time because it will lead to social disharmony and the dilution of the age-old social norms which may bring families into conflict with each other. May be, the society would realize the gravity of the situation then and desist from the pernicious practice of looking down upon the female child.

As the saying goes, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Thing seems to be looking up now. Some women have dared to make inroads into the male bastion. In cities and towns, particularly in north India, women accompanying the funeral procession or being present in the cremation ground, the *Śmaśāna*, is a common enough sight. There are some who have resorted to performing even the last rites. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, in its issue of January 27, 2003 has attempted a profile of such women. Ms. Latika Padgaonkar, the Executive Editor of the *Cinemaya* in her write-up published in the above issue, records the event of the sudden death of her father and says that even though there was no shortage of the male relatives to perform the last rites, every one, the priest included, awaited her arrival from Delhi and quite simply took it for granted that it would be she who would perform the rites at the Vaikuntha even though she was accompanied by her son. No questions were asked, no eyebrows raised. This act appeared to them and to her most natural. Nor was there any discussion later of the ground-breaking she had taken. Perhaps that itself was a measure of how far her large family of cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. had travelled in their faith and outlook. Latika feels immense satisfaction looking back

now as to how she was part of gently bending tradition without fuss and noise. Quite unconsciously, she writes, "we had risen above a stubborn duality of opposite: male and female." Her final remark: "Social change, I discovered, when it swells from below, can reach far without tearing the social matrix".

In line with the above was the action of another lady Shruti, a Delhi based teacher who performed the last rites of her deceased husband even though she had a little son who she did not want to subject to the ordeal. For breaking the tradition she had another reason too. She had been closest to her husband who was also a friend and lover to her. It was but appropriate, she thought, that the send off for the final journey be done by her. The priest, as she records, did not bat an eye lid when she expressed this desire of her, though to family members it was an outrage, an act of her wilful neglect of them. They also relented later in deference to her sentiments.

It is not only in the area of performing certain rituals only, women are venturing into the area of priesthood as well. In the very heartland of Maharashtra's orthodox Brahmanical order Pune-based Shanker Sewa Samiti (SSS) since its inception in 1976, has trained, through its one year course, over 7000 women priests from all castes¹⁴.

Another Pune-based organization, the Jnana Prabodhini (JP), has blended tradition with modernity in its three months course. So far, 800 people, half of whom are women, have completed the course. Apart from giving training, Prabodhini's core team of seventeen male and eight female priests also regularly performs rituals¹⁵.

In Kerala, till a few years ago, anything related to Vedic hymns and sacred ceremonies was considered the domain of Namboodiris and the Pottis – the two classes of Brahmanical order. But over the past few years 37 non-brahmin women have become priests, thanks to the efforts of Gurupadam of Kodungallur in Thrissur district.¹⁶

The revolution is taking roots in Varanasi as well, where students of Panini Kanya Mahavidyalaya are being trained in

priesthood. Dressed in yellow and wearing *yajñyopavīta*, a group of young girls performs *havana*, pouring oblations in the fire and chanting *mantras* in chaste Sanskrit. The atmosphere is charged with spiritual fervour, reminiscent of the *āśramas* of yore. This unique centre of learning has produced a number of Sanskrit scholars and *karmakāṇḍī* women Pundits. Presently 70 students from different parts of the country are on its rolls¹⁸.

And all the effort seems to be bearing fruit as acceptable change in attitude is visible.

In Pune, for example, no eyebrows are raised when a woman priest conducts marriages, *pūjās* or *śrāddhas*. a/

In fact, there is growing preference for women priests for conducting these ceremonies. As a client put it: Women priests do not take short cuts while performing rituals.

5/9/01 Suniti Gadgil, a JKP team member performs around 15 *śrāddha* ceremonies every month besides conducting *pūjā* and sacred thread ceremonies. Says she, earlier I used to do only other rituals but I decided to do the *śrāddha* ceremony only after no priest was available to do the *śrāddha* of my mother".¹⁸

Not only are women being trained in priesthood in large numbers, the long lost tradition of performing the sacred thread ceremony for girls to give them the right to perform all religious rituals in the family has also been evolved.

Since the Brahmin community has now started moving to other professions, the traditional knowledge of the rituals is getting narrower. The reason for this mainly lies in the diminishing of Sanskrit teaching. The traditional Pandits who could officiate at the ceremonies or could perform the *pūjās* are getting scarce. In their absence, a phenomenon unthinkable till a few years back of video cassettes of important ceremonies and *pūjās* to assist people perform them is making its appearance. Even when the Pandits are available, their performance because of ignorance of Sanskrit; quite often they have not studied that at any stage; is very inadequate. They just perform the ritual, that too perfunctorily and are absolutely in no position to explain it, to an inquisitive modern Hindu who may be keen on knowing

its significance as also the meaning of the *mantras* accompanying it. There is some thinking on at the moment to start institutions for training priests and pujaris to ensure their availability to the Hindu community.

A news report published in *The Times of India*, New Delhi in its issue of June 4, 2003 also speaks of institutions which train people in priesthood in addition to the Sanskrit Vidyalayas and the Universities which run Karmakāṇḍa courses. It also speaks of loosening of caste barriers for priesthood that being no longer the sole preserve of the Brahmins, a pointer to the whiff of change overtaking Hindu society. Something which was unthinkable a couple of years back is a practical reality now. The reports reads: "Looking for a *purohit* to solemnize your daughter's wedding? Take your pick from the mind-boggling variety.

You can pick and choose from a variety of male Pundits or females ones, to suit your requirements. You can also go for a Brahmin Pundit or his Thakur, Bania, or Kayasth colleague. The liberal sect can even opt for Yadav, Kurmi, or SC purohits, guaranteed to be as professionally proficient as their upper caste batch-mates.

With an army of freshly trained 3000 odd purohits in UP one can bid adieu to the staid and not so friendly neighbourhood Pundit lisping his way to the *pūjā*.

Bringing in this silent revolution is the U.P. Sanskrit Sansthan which started the 'Purohit Karmakanda Prashikshana Yojana' in 2002."

The Sansthan ran a short term course for a batch of 100 with a pre-condition that each would go back to his native place and train at least 30 in turn. They did a good job and now the energetic new entrants give their conventional counterparts a run for their money, claims Chandra Kant Dwivedi, Director of the Sansthan.

The Sansthan has come up with a "do-it-yourself" book of instructions for the adventurous. The 300-page Karmakāṇḍa manual- a best seller—details as to how to carry out different religious ceremonies.

The latest to follow in the footsteps of the U.P. Sanskrit Sansthan, as per the report published in *The Hindustan Times*,

New Delhi in its issue of September 28, 2005, are the Rajasthan Sanskrit Academy, Jaipur and the Sanskritam, Kota which are training sons of the Dalits who till recently were forbidden from even entering the temples in priesthood and are being imparted basic knowledge of related disciplines like Astrology. This they are doing by organizing camps of short term duration. A 20-day camp was organized by them in September, 2005 where a dozen-odd boys from backward communities received instruction in priesthood.

The hideous custom of Sati, the burning of the widow in the funeral pire of her husband, though abolished legally since 1829, raises its head every now and then and is not limited to uneducated poor widows. The latest victim of this, Roop Kanwar of the Deorala village of the district of Sikar of Rajasthan, was a graduate girl, educated and brought up in the comparatively modern city of Jaipur. Though the ghastly act on September 4 1987 had stirred up nation-wide protest and shocked the conscience of the more open minded of the Hindus, there were thousands, a huge number of them women, who gathered at the place of the immolation chanting the praise of the immolated. There were attempts at glorification of the act through a ceremony called the Chunari Mahotsava. The Rajput youths with naked swords guarded the place of immolation, the Sati Sthal. Some even among the political and the religious leaders including the incumbent of one of the most respected of the religious seats of the Hindus, the Shankaracharya of Puri lent their support to the custom on scriptural authority. The Deorala incident made people look around and acquaint themselves with other places like Jhunjhunu where thirteen women had committed Sati in the 17th century AD. The event there is celebrated annually on September 10 at the Rani Sati temple erected at the Sati Sthal. Large numbers of people gather there on the day mentioned above, say prayers and make offerings.¹⁹

The glorification of Sati has an economic aspect also. Some people have their vested interest in commemoration of the ghastly event. The offerings by large congregations at Sati Sthals are a

source of income to their self appointed custodians. They gobble up large sums and evidently have their own motive in supporting the ghastly custom and its glorification. Apart from collections, a widow dying may mean one person less to claim a share in the property of the deceased man. Hence the desire of the relatives to get rid of her by burning her forcibly or otherwise along with the dead husband, proclaim her a Sati and impart divinity to her for her supreme self sacrifice. The helpless widow then is a Devi who invites veneration and worship. The existing Anti Sati Act did not have provision in it for preventing the glorification of Sati. Through the effort of the various women's organizations in the wake of the Deorala incident the Government of Rajasthan promulgated the Prevention of Sati Act, 1987 which prohibited it (the glorification of Sati) in the temples to be constructed henceforth. It has no provision in it to prohibit it in the temples in existence already. Accordingly the Rajasthan High Court did not uphold the legislation. The Parliament of India passed the Prevention of Sati Act taking all aspects of the practice of Sati into consideration. The Act got the assent of the President of India on January 3/1988 and was gazzetted on January 6, 1988.

Every thing said and done, the unpalatable fact remains that neither literacy nor improved career prospect for women have helped raise the status of female child in the country. It is not only men who can do so, women have also to change their attitude towards the members of their own sex. The demand for dowry, a prime cause for the bride burning does not emanate invariably from only the men-folk but also from women-folk. The female in-laws are often guilty of ill-treating the bride for bringing insufficient dowry forcing her to take the extreme step of ending her life or in the alternative to continue to live a life of misery. Of late some women's organizations like Saheli, All India Women's Conference, Manushi, Mahila Janawadi Samiti, the Women's Co-ordinating Council have come into being to help members of their sex in distress. The attitude of men towards women too has undergone some change, helping them a bit to come to their own to occupy their rightful place in society.

At the government level Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India has prepared a National Perspective Plan on Women. While dealing with the position of women in the present day Hindu society one thing that has to be borne in mind is that the position varies from region to region. In a country of the size of India it cannot be hoped to be uniform. In Western and Southern India the position of Women is better than in the Northern and Eastern. The dowry deaths and Sati incidents are conspicuously absent there. Further, women in these parts enjoy much more freedom than their sisters in other parts even with all the entrenched conservatism and orthodoxy. The case of some mod families apart, the stranglehold of caste is so tight on Hindu society, particularly in the countryside and small towns and talukas that marriages outside the caste or the communities invite severest of censure. Panchayats meet and prescribe the punishment. If one of the parties, the boy or the girl is of the higher caste, and the other one of the lower one, the members of the higher one make it as a prestige issue and choose to kill the boy or the girl of the lower cast or subject them to violence. Such killings go by the name of the "honour killing". On January 10, 2004 a convention of victims of these honour killings was held in New Delhi, where they narrated their tales of woe. Among the speakers was one Geetarani of Hoshiarpur in Punjab, a Rajput woman who had married a Jat who was killed within two months of the marriage by Rajput villagers. This when both the boy and girl had the consent of their parents for the matrimonial relationship. Some Rajputs from the boy's village had cut off his (the boy's) hands and legs and subsequently killed him for daring to marry one of their women. Most of such cases are reported from Punjab, Haryana and parts of Western Uttar Pradesh. 23 such cases were reported in 2002-2003. One out of every ten murders in Punjab and Haryana are 'honour killings'. The convention organized by the All India Democratic Women's Association called for a commitment by political parties to upholds one's right to marry one of one's choice and a ban on caste panchayats.

Untouchability has been abolished under the constitution of India, though as a social phenomenon, it still is practised, of course in a much subdued scale, the orthodoxy feeling helpless in upholding it in the present circumstances. In the buses, the railway trains, the aeroplanes and other public vehicles an orthodox Brahmin may be forced to share the seat with the so called untouchables, his orthodoxy notwithstanding. He may also be forced to buy provisions from the ration shop or the provision store owned by some one from the lower caste. He may also likewise have to serve under a lower caste officer who now availing himself of the equal opportunities of education and special concessions in the form of scholarship and stipend as also reservation in jobs may have made it to the top.

As for the caste barriers, the process of industrialization has contributed not a little to their loosening. The big plants and factories as also giant industries coming up everyday have brought together large communities of workers and labourers from all castes who live together in big settlements, where they cannot keep on exclusively to the customs of their respective castes. The inevitable interaction among them has helped loosen the many barriers among them. The original idea of certain castes holding on to their professions does not hold good now. The sheer instinct of survival makes them step out of them. For one, the openings are few in their own professions, there may be more in others. With rapid industrialization, a Brahmin may find that he can earn much more in a factory or a workshop or in an office than in a temple or a traditional institution. He may also not find the job satisfaction in the ancestral profession he may be looking for and may like to try pastures anew. It could also be that with the change in the social habits there may not be enough work for him in his ancestral profession. Since the priesthood or teaching in a traditional institution may not carry now the prestige they did earlier, it may not satisfy his ambition and he may opt out for a non-conventional profession. He may also not be in a position to carry on vigorously with the do's and don'ts of his caste to which heredity had conditioned him. He may be forced to make

adjustment in his life style. He cannot hope to be the superiority-sporting Brahmin, his ancestors were. Though maintaining his separate identity and the semblance of caste superiority, he would have to be a changed man, mixing up with the people of lower castes who share with him his profession. To that extent he has shed off the rigidity of his caste and that by sheer force of circumstances.

Since science and technology have brought the world much closer together, there is more of interaction between communities and groups which makes them shed a part of their exclusiveness. The western liberal ideas have also influenced not a little the educated segments of Hindu society in making them more flexible and responsive to new ideas of greater interaction. There is less of discrimination among them consequently against the lower castes.

The practice of untouchability has given a lot of bad name to Hindu society. It is interesting to note in this connection that in India it is not the special characteristic of the Hindu society alone, other societies too having their quota of it. An overwhelming majority of the followers of other religions being converts from Hinduism, they have carried the practice to their new religious societies thus divesting Hindu society of the stigma of its sole preserve. T. C. Joseph in his interesting write-up "On the Other Side of Conversion" in *The Hindustan Times*²⁰ makes the point that the Christians of Harijan or scheduled caste origin who form 75% of the total Christian population of India, i.e., 1.6 crore of the two crore Christians, are discriminated against within the Church though according to the Christian religion there is within its ranks neither Greek, nor Jew, nor Gentile, nor slaves, nor free men; rather as far as spiritual membership is concerned, there is not even male or female, all being one in Christ. A Harijan simply acquires equality with a Brahmin because both have gone through a five minutes ritual and have had water poured over their heads. Caste is not skin-deep, its stigma sticks. Nor is rank subdued which is why Christians from among the various castes still like to follow erstwhile demarcations. Rarely is there an inter-

caste marriage within the community and a studied segregation is often maintained in Christian settlements, in Churches and even in places of burial when mud should actually be an excellent leveler. And at the highest level, Harijans, in spite of their numerical strength, have no worthwhile representation in the hierarchy. This is all untouchability of sort; and it can rightly be argued that the concept of equality should gain ground within the Church itself among the baptized just as attempts are made to promote it elsewhere. Prior to Joseph, C.S. Jayaram had published his write-up "Dalit Christians Seek Job Quota" which had appeared in *The Hindustan Times*²¹ wherein too the sad plight of the Harijans or scheduled caste converts to Christianity was bemoaned. According to the writer these scheduled caste Christian converts are deprived politically, discriminated against socially and exploited economically. They continue to be branded as untouchables and even in Christian villages are forced to live in segregated "cheris". Even the benefits of the educational, medical and developmental projects of the Church do not reach the Dalit (Harijan convert) Christians. They are discriminated against from becoming priests, etc. Of the 41 Christian M.P.s there is none from the Dalit Christians. They have organized themselves now into a group and put forward the demand that they be provided with all facilities and special concessions including job reservations as are available to Hindu outcastes. What is the position with the Christians is also the position with the Sikhs too, whose faith does not recognize caste barriers. In actual practice there are acute caste distinctions in Sikh community. Inter-marriages between converts from different castes are few and far between. A Khatri Sikh being of the higher caste would not like in normal course to marry a Jat or a Mahzabi (scheduled caste) Sikh. This the Muslims too may not like to do. Just as there is caste prejudice among Christians and Sikhs, so is it even among Muslims. Like Dalit (low caste) Christians and Sikhs, there are Dalit Muslims too. A report published in *The Times of India* under the title "Caste Away: Dalit Muslims Seek their Rights" refers to an assemblage in Delhi of Dalit Muslims from all over the

country to claim their right of equality by demanding reservation in jobs in line with their caste fellows among Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs. It says that though caste division may be sacrilegious in Islam, yet in India it is a reality. The Ashraf-Aflat (noble and low) division is very much prevalent among the Muslims even if the community leaders may not want to recognize it. The 15% Ashraf (the upper class mostly of Arab, Persian and Afghanistan) controls jobs, education and political space while the converts still lug the low caste tag from pre-conversion days. There are six tribes which have a sizable Muslim population listed in the ST category. There are 55 castes with Muslims in it, in the OBC list. The gathering raised the question: If Muslims can be the OBC why cannot they be scheduled castes.²² Prejudices die hard. They continue to persist even after conversion which is no guarantee to their disappearance. Once confined to Hinduism, they have made inroads into other communities. Caste in a way is an all-India phenomenon, rooted deep in the Indian psyche. There have been protests galore against the rigours of the caste system which determines the position of an individual in society, high or low, on the basis of birth. There has been a long chain of social reformers who have put their might in its eradication. In line with the above is a movement sweeping the State of Gujarat these days.

There has been an age-old practice of offering tea to Harijans in separate saucers called Rampatar placed outside a rural household. The practice has penetrated deep among Harijan sub-castes too. The upper crust Harijans, Venkars, Rohits, emulate high caste rural folk while offering tea in Rampatar to the lowest-rung scavengers or Valmikiis. The tea is poured in such a way that even sprinkles do not touch the server.

As symbol of casteism in rural Gujarat, so far there have been isolated efforts to fight against this evil custom that is taken for granted by all. A decade ago one, Dahyabhai Parmar would go about breaking the Rampatras wherever he saw them. The result was that he entered into a scuffle with a tea vendor and ended up with a criminal case against them.

January 25, 2005 saw the start of an unique 100-days campaign to end the custom, asking the rural folk of 40 talukas of Anand, Kheda, Vadodara etc. to give up Rampatar and take up Bhimpatar.

Organized by an Ahmedabad-based non-political organization, Navsarjan Trust, it mainly asks upper crust Harijans to take a pledge not to resort to the casteist custom. It asks the scavengers to take tea from Bhimpatar or the same saucers as people from upper caste Harijans do. Unless the Dalits learn to reject casteism, how can they be expected to fight against it?

Nearly 200 Padayatris from several non-political bodies permanently participate in the campaign and move from village to village.²³

There is a resistance now in the Hindu society to conversion to Islam and Christianity. The whole-scale conversion to Islam of the residents of the South Indian village of Meenakshipuram had shocked the conscience of the Hindu community and had activated it to do something positive to stop them. Scores of Hindu volunteers had descended on the village to readmit into the Hindu fold people who had deserted it in which they did meet with partial success. Similarly many Hindu organizations have become active in following the attempts of the Christian Missionaries in converting tribal and other backward classes in different parts of the country. The movement for re-conversion started by the organizations like the Ārya Samāja, after some initial success, have made little headway, even some of the reconverted, not having got the social sanction reverting to their new-found haven of Islam and Christianity. As for conversions there have practically been none, prosylitization being none of the characteristics of the Hindu religion. Not to talk of the votaries of other religions, even the deserters from the Hindu fold are considered as fallen, Mlecchas from which position they can never recover. The Hindu society still is thus a very closed society not admitting easily into it people from other religions.

A development worth noticing in modern Hindu society is the loosening of the family ties particularly in bigger cities and

towns. Joint family has been a special characteristic of the Hindu society since times immemorial. Large numbers of family members, father, mother, brothers with their wives and children, unmarried sisters and other family members have been living under one roof sharing the same kitchen. Of late, in urban areas families have started bifurcating. Modern education is partly to account for this. The modern Hindu young man wants independence for himself, he is more self-centred and wants privacy. His educated wife who more often than not is a working woman wants the benefit of the earnings of her husband and herself to her own limited circle of her husband, herself and her children only. She has little time and inclination, even if she does not have a job, to serve the other members of the family. She is chary of attending on the in-laws and the brothers and the sisters of the husband. The result: The joint family as an essential part of the Hindu ethos is under strain now. It has started cracking up. The process is being accelerated by migration of the family members in search of jobs in other places which come severely in the way of the family members living together in one place. Since the sons have now started moving away from their parents and other relatives and have started setting up their separate households, the western phenomenon of the loneliness of the old people has opened itself up to Hindu society too. The concept of the homes for the old in the western sense of the term is now catching up in India though it has been there in the form of the Vānaprasthāśrama when the old people would retire to the forest with wives after voluntarily renouncing their possessions. The old system no longer holds good now. There are no forests around. Even if there be, people do not feel like moving into them. They prefer to continue to enjoy the warmth of the family. Now that it has begun to be denied to them, they move into some Āśrama in certain religious orders. But there are no organized homes for the old to which they may repair after being neglected and rejected by their children. The social security which had been available to the aged and the infirm in the form of the care bestowed on them by the rest of the members of the family is no longer

available to as of them as have their families (in the wider sense of the term) broken leading to their feeling forlorn and uncared for.

Of the fourfold stages of life as conceived and practised by the ancients, it is only the two, the Brahmacarya, the period of study and the Gṛhastha, the life of house-holders which are the vogue in the Hindu society at present. T. 2. 5

Very few go in for the Vānaprastha, living away from home alone or with wife, after voluntary renunciation of their possessions and fewer still for Sannyāsa, the life of a recluse. They stay on in the families – not a recent phenomenon certainly – the other members taking care of them, looking not only to their physical comforts but also to their emotional satisfaction as well, inculcating in them the sense of belonging, the feeling of acceptance which has an importance of its own in old age. The grandpa and the grandma play with the grand children, teach them the three Rs, tell them stories, derive joy from their small talk and that more than compensates for the infirmities of their age. With the break-up coming in of the joint family this phenomenon is under heavy strain. This is having its impact on the Hindu society in another respect too. Many of the stories from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas and other texts and the devotional hymns the young ones used to learn earlier in their childhood from their grandparents and other elderly relatives even before their schooling. This kept them in touch with the old tradition which was handed down thus from generation to generation. With the break in the joint family there is break in this too. The new generation of Hindus has little exposure to this knowledge and wisdom and is moving farther and farther away from its tradition which is causing extreme anxiety to elders among them. This phenomenon is much more acute with the Indian immigrants who find their children cut off from their Indian moorings. They want them to know something of the culture of their ancestors, their civilization and religion even while living in an altogether different social and cultural milieu in from countries of their birth and upbringing. They would thus have an

opportunity of having an indirect contact with India, to keep on with something of their inherited Indianness.

Though India is modernizing at a fast rate, the belief in out-dated occult practices still holds its sway. The soothsayers, the Tantriks, the Ojhas still call the shots. It was at the behest of a Tantrik that a man had killed his wife, as reported in the press to make an offering to Goddess Kali to ward off the evil influence of some spirit on one of his sons.²⁴ The ailments, the diseases, the losses in money or business and successive deaths are attributed not only by the uneducated superstitious rural folk but even by the city-bred white collared to some evil spirit, *kisi pret kā sāyā*, for the exorcization of which they would repair to an Ojha or a Tantrik.

Many of the problems the people ascribe to some evil spirit or the other. It is to ward them off that people resort to quaint practices. Among the Santhals the appearance of the first tooth in the upper gum is considered a bad omen. To break the spell it is necessary to marry off the girl immediately. Marrying to a boy would serve the purpose but that entailing considerable expenditure, Baburam Handa, a poor Santhal share cropper of Khanyan, married off his daughter Karmanidhi to a stray dog on June 11, 2003, the ceremony being attended by 100 guests. The evil spell having been broken by the ritual, the girl was free to marry later and not to suffer any stigma²⁵.

How superstition holds the sway over Hindu psyche is illustrated by a bizarre incident. No good rain in donkey's year in Karnataka. No *pūjās* appeased the rain god. So when the prayers did not help, the residents of Magadi Taluk of Bangalore's outskirts invoked an ancient alternative. They arranged the marriage between two donkeys. Legend has it that troubled by the absence of rain and wind the gods approached Varuṇa, the god of water, for help who directed them to a donkey. The donkey is believed to have shown them the way. Following this legend the Muhurtam for the wedding was finalized. It fell between 9.10 am to 9.15 am. The female donkey named Gaṅgā dressed in green silk *sari* with gold *zari* was married to a male donkey Varuṇa

amidst chanting of *mantras* and the ringing of bells with the Arati plate being placed right under their nose.²⁵

The belief in the ghosts, the evil spirits and their possessing the human being is deeply ingrained in the Hindu psyche. India perhaps may be having the dubious distinction of being the only country of the world where there is a special fair for the ghosts and the evil spirits. Every year on Paush Purnima which falls in January, a village in the southern Madhya Pradesh holds a Bhoot-Pret Ka Mela. The objective is to exorcise those haunted by evil soul. About 5000 such 'possessed' people are brought to the Guru Deoji Sant temple at Malaipur, 290 Kms. south of Bhopal, from across MP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh annually. On Paush Purnima, this year, the village had more than 60000 visitors including families of past victims, curious onlookers, but mostly those convinced that their relatives were possessed by spirits. The fair concluded on the day of Basant Pancami, on February 6, 2004.²⁷

With dishevelled hair and strange shrieks, the 'possessed' cry before the priests who sprinkle holy water to bring the spirit under control. 'Who are you?' shouts the temple priest Bhikhariram at a 15 years old girl brought to the fair by her father for exorcism. Malajipur is a nondescript village with some 200 priests, who claim they have been 'trained in the art of expelling evil spirits.' Head priest Chandra Singh Mahant said the fair has been taking place annually for 250 years. Mahant said the two banyan trees in the temple compound are home to 'several lakh ghosts who have been expelled from human bodies'. 'Our temple is the Samadhi of Guru Deoji Sant, who was born around 1700 AD. He was a Rajput from Rajasthan whose family settled here', Mahant said. 'Since the childhood, he revealed supernatural powers, turning sand to sugar, clay to jaggery and giving sight to the blind. During droughts his miracles found granaries overflowing'. Priests say Deoji Sant had asked villagers to bury him in a *samādhi* and exhume him 11 months later. But, the villagers dug him nine months later and found a foetus of an unborn child. They buried it again', Mahant said. 'No one knows how the tradition

of exorcising at his *samādhi* became a ritual but the fair has been held since then.

Slack business or some malady the astrologer would ascribe to bad effects of some planets who would need to be placated by some special *pūjā* where he would officiate or the wearing of some stones or chanting of some *mantras*. The blessings of the *sanyāsins* or the *gurus* are taken by the mass of credulous Hindus as the panacea for the ills that may be affecting them. It is not only for the spiritual solace that they would repair to them but also for the solution of their mundane problems.

It is the faith deeply ingrained in Hindu psyche that if gods are pleased things would go in their favour. Special *pūjās* are organized for this purpose and vows of special offering to them undertaken. It was in fulfilment of the vow that if his new company did well that a non resident Indian of United States who is believed to be a software Engineer from Tamil Nadu had donated anonymously a diamond-studded crown made of 1.5 kg of 24 caret gold to Lord Venkateswara which is said to have cost him over Rs. 1 crore. The crown was donated in the presence of Kanchi Shankaracharya who performed the morning rites and then handed it over to temple authorities²⁸. The above is one instance among hundreds and thousands of them.

It is in this spirit that the animals are sacrificed. According to a report published in *The Hindustan Times*²⁹ lacs of goats, sheep, buffalos and cocks were sacrificed during a *pūjā* across Orissa notwithstanding protests of animal rights activities. People in some parts of Orissa may have taken to sacrificing cucumbers or gourds but the majority still kill animals to gratify the Mother Goddess. In Devī worship power is concentrated in blood which is seen as a symbol of reproduction. Hence animal sacrifices are practised by Shakti cult believers. All that modernization and consumerism have done to the practice is to alter the orientation. Animal sacrifice which was a community affair in the past meant for the general welfare of the village, has turned to individuals doing it to satisfy their desires. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animal's Act is simply ineffective in preventing the people to go in for animal sacrifice.

Recently the Government of Bihar had to step in to ban animal sacrifice in the temples of the state³⁰. This will, for sure, go the way the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal's Act of 1960 has gone. Those in charge of the implementation of the Act look the other way when it is violated for fear of being charged with hurting the religious sentiments of the people. This was proved when King Gyanendra of Nepal on coming to India after his coronation, sacrificed, despite the protest of the animals right groups, five animals, including a buffalo at the ancient Kamakhya temple in Guwahati and a goat in Kalighat at Kolkata's famous Kali temple³¹.

Animal sacrifice in temples is an ancient Hindu custom to propitiate the gods. This was turned into 'a divine ritual' by kings and feudal landlords. Over the years, this bloody practice has acquired perverse sociological dimensions which have very little to do with the earlier rituals. Now the animals are beheaded for a variety of mundane reasons, reasons varying from wanting a male child to seeking a cure for a disease. Not surprisingly a massive network of contractors, temple trusts, wealthy priests, money lenders and crooks have got involved in this trade where-by people are coaxed to sacrifice animals. ✓

The hold of tradition on Hindu society one can understand, it being one of the most ancient societies of the world which could gather a lot of dust in its onward march that got acceptability in the name of tradition, age-old practice and time-honoured custom. ✓ *are*
What is more interesting is that some of the incidents recorded in the texts like the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata the veracity of which is still doubtful, their being found in such portions as are considered later additions or interpolations. The Agniparīkṣā, the fire ordeal of Sītā is one such. An incident occurs in the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa where Sītā was made to prove her chastity by walking on fire. Well, Sītā of the Rāmāyaṇic text walked on the fire or not, a modern Sītā of the name of Sangita was made to do so to prove her chastity by walking on it. As the story goes, as per a report in *The Hindustan Times*, she,

married to a person in Ujjain, had gone to Mumbai to attend a marriage. From there she reportedly went to Vaishno Devi with a friend and returned to Ujjain after eleven days. But her suspicious husband refused to allow her entry into the house. Sangita narrated the turn of events to her mother who in turn got in touch with community elders gathered at a private place. She was given a ceremonial bath and turmeric paste was applied to her hands. Some Peepal leaves were placed on her palms and finally a red-hot iron rod was put on them. Sangita was to hold the rod and walk a short distance after which she dropped the rod. Luckily she, a woman of Sakal Gihara community of Madhya Pradesh, did not suffer any burns. The whole incident was video-graphed and the cassettes were later seized by the police³².

The Agniparikṣā of the modern times is not restricted to women only. A young man had to undergo a similar Parikṣā to prove his innocence against the charge of his having illicit relationship with his cousin sister. The Panchayat of the Sansi Samaj of the Sansi colony of Jodhpur had prescribed this test for the boy. The Panchs placed on his hand, a red-hot axe and asked him to walk seven steps. The boy passed the test with no burns on his hands. Before that the boy was given bath and made to wear Dhoti and the Yajñopavīta. After the innocence of the boy was established, his cousin sister could go back to her in-laws who had not been allowing her entry in their house for the past three days.

Interestingly, this Agniparikṣā is not limited only to the Hindus. According to a news item even four Muslim men were made to undergo it in Pakistan. A village council in the district of Multan prescribed this test for men who were suspected of killing a woman Saada Bai. The men were ordered to walk on 2.5 meters of burning embers. The men's feet were then wrapped in cloth and examined three hours later. One of the four had suffered burns. He was declared the killer.³³

Though this is not peculiar to the Hindus, science and technology have weakened the hold of religion on society. So have done the exigencies of the modern age. There are more of

the elderly temple or Arya Samaj going people today than the young ones. The younger generation seems to be distancing itself from the traditional way of life. Given much more to the materialistic ways, it has little time and inclination for religious practices which it understands very little, the family and the society having provided him with little exposure to it. This should be a matter of serious concern for the leaders of the Hindu society who need to bestir themselves and do something about it at an early date so that the position is salvaged well in time.

Time was when groups of holy people, the Sannyāsins, moved from village to village preaching Dharma and delivering sermons on matters religious. Week long recitations, the *saptāhas*, from the *Bhāgavata* were organized, the sessions of stories from old texts were held, and the scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were enacted. This was a regular phenomenon of Hindu life. A break has come in this and the population has little exposure to this traditional link with the past. The diminishing of the traditional Sanskrit schools, the Pathashalas and the Vidyālayas, too has played its part in this. The Pandits in these institutions to whom people looked up for spiritual and religious guidance and who were readily available to them in the village are no longer so, the Pathashalas and the Vidyālayas having withered away with students not coming forward to learn Sanskrit, that being too unremunerative to them.

Widow marriage is still not the prevailing norm. Inter-caste marriages, however, are not that exception now as they once used to be nor do they stir up the protest that they did earlier, winning thus grudging acceptance from the Hindu society.

There is a lot of talk now-a-days of Hindu chauvinism. Luckily for India, it is limited only to certain pockets. An overwhelming majority of the Hindus are still away from it. That accounts for the presence in India of large minorities, six million Sikhs, twenty million Christians and one hundred twelve million Muslims.

Even in India, the cradle of Hinduism, not to speak of countries other than it, the Hindu youth are suffering from the problem of identity. They have little idea of what goes with a

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 Hindu. With the joint family cracking up and the parents ever busy with their vocations or problems there is nobody to tell them of their moorings. The roving religious preachers who would frequent cities, towns and countryside giving discourses on the essentials of Hindu religion and telling stories from the epics and the Purāṇas acquainting their audiences with Hindu mythology are steadily declining in number. The onslaught of western thought and way of life and love of the lucre have cut the youth away from their traditional base. The regular visits to temples by youth are getting scarcer or are confined only to those coming from deeply religious families, the families where the elders still exercise strong hold over the youngsters. Very few of the College or the University going students sport the tuft of the hair though belonging to the three upper castes and the sacred thread, the yajñopavīta. Among the Samskāras generally the two, the Vivāha, marriage and Antyeṣṭi, the funeral are observed though Nāmakaraṇa, christening and Muṇḍana, tonsure are not altogether absent, some of the families being rather particular in observing them. In most parts of north India the Upanayana, the sacred thread ceremony is either not observed or is concomitant with the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom made to wear it before it with little of ceremonial, though in south India it is observed as a matter of general routine. The Vādārambha Samskāra, though followed in the south is conspicuous by its absence in the north. The other Samskāras, are all but forgotten. The plain fact is that most of young men and women, not only they, even the elders—have no idea of the Samskāras, their importance, the ritual going with them and the part they play in an individual's life. It would not be a surprise if they do not know even their names or even their number. With the descendants of the priests helping in the performance of the ceremonies taking to other vocations there is real dearth of them. Their dwindling numbers have given rise to the curious phenomenon of cassettes being developed and the ceremonies being performed by playing them. In many cases the priests being not well-versed in Sanskrit are not able to recite the mantras/ ślokas correctly let alone explaining them and

elucidating the various steps in the ceremony, leaving the participants almost totally ignorant of what is being pronounced and why. This may not matter much to the older generation which may be prone to accept things as they are with its focus on the sacredness of what goes on but may not go well with the more inquisitive of the younger one which is more inclined to go into everything scientifically and rationally. That being not satisfied, it leads to general apathy towards religious ritual as such, as something which has to be observed more as tradition than anything else.

The young Hindu men and women today find themselves at crossroads. With so many currents and cross-currents buffeting them their thinking in matters religious and mythological has become fairly unclear. Their identity as Hindus is at stake. They are Hindu because they are born of Hindu parents, blissfully ignorant in more cases than one of what their religion really stands for. Ask a Hindu youngster as to why Gaṇeśa worshipped at the start of any enterprise for the removal of obstacles as Vighna-vināyaka or just Vināyaka the shortened form of the word carries elephant head on him or why he, the heavy and the pot-bellied one rides a nondescript rat which is too small for him, or why Kārtikeya sports six faces occasioning the appellation Ṣaḍānana or Ṣaṇmukha, you can only expect in an overwhelmingly large number of cases blank expression. Not to talk of Śruti and Smṛti, he may not be aware of even the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā. Not to speak of the titles, even the number of the Ūpaniṣads, he may not even know. It is a fact, though not a pleasant one, that many young men and women of Hindu parents came to know of the national epics the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata through the T. V. serials. In one of the tests conducted some time back many people mentioned Ramanand Sagar as the author of the Rāmāyaṇa!

The economic progress coming in the wake of the scientific and technological progress has led to fostering of material outlook in society with consumerism its dominant note. Watching the late night movies and the television channels which have proliferated of late and getting up late in the morning is what the younger

channel
generation in the affluent sections of Hindu society is exposed to. The middle section being too busy thinking of ways and means for equipping for career or earning livelihood has little time for religious observances or listening to discourses of saints and preachers either in temple precincts or community halls or open or covered Paṇḍāls or on the television screens through various chanells like Āsthā and Saṁskāra which beam them forth. How are the Hindu values to be inculcated then? Even the basic things about the Hindu deities, as pointed out above, the younger people do not know, let alone the rigmarole of the myths going with them as also the basic tenets, the ideas and ideals of Hinduism which the older Hindu had the good luck to imbibe through interaction among the members of the extended family or the many holy men crossing his path.

The crisis of identity has deepened with the erosion of Sanskrit learning which till recently had been widely pursued. This was a great link with the past. The Sanskrit lessons drawn from various ancient texts would provide the young learner with a window to the past. Quite a big chunk of the knowledge of his religion the learner would get through these lessons. It is not without reason that it is said that culture is dependent upon Sanskrit: saṁskṛtīḥ saṁskṛtāśritā. ✓

With the development of science it is but natural that a young person should develop scientific temper. He may question everything. Efforts have, therefore, to be initiated to answer his questions and not to brush them aside with a shrug as some of the elders are wont to do. The questions of the youngsters have to be handled delicately and with utmost sensitivity and sympathy. The spirit of enquiry has to be encouraged and not deprecated. In the Gītā the Lord has mentioned paripraśna, counter questioning, as the means of acquiring knowledge:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |
upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattvadarśinaḥ ||³⁴*

It is incumbent upon the leaders of the Hindu community to arrange for the education of the youngsters in the basics of Hinduism. This can be done through discourses by the learned

people with scientific temper and the gift of the gab to reach out to wider sections of the younger lot and the ability to motivate them to have a general perception of Hinduism. The purpose can also be achieved by bringing out small tracts or monographs on different aspects of it: its gods and goddesses, the myths surrounding them, its sacred texts, its sects, its Saṁskāras and rituals, its festivals, its systems of philosophy, its great thinkers, the seers and sages and so on. If the older generation has the good of Hinduism at heart, it has first to equip itself with adequate knowledge about it and then impart it to the new generation.

It is a very competitive society in which one lives today. Just as there is stiff competition in other spheres of life, there is competition in religion too. There are people at work who are out to promote their own religion. This, they do by not only highlighting the good points of their religions but also by attacking other religions by picking holes in them. Hinduism has been subjected for long periods to these vicious attacks which are continuing upto this day being an ongoing process. The Hindu youth has to be wary of these attacks and not carried away by them. He has to have his own arsenal to fight them and repulse them. For this he has to have full knowledge of his religion first and has to be educated sufficiently to counter with arguments marshalled cogently and consistently what its opponents have to say. He has to put up proper defences. He has to have full grasp of what Hinduism stands for.

While he has to have that, he has also to be conscious of making distinction between Hinduism, its high principles, its philosophy of universalism and toleration and accomodation of divergent views and the present state of the Hindu society with all its past baggage of distinction of high and low based on the mere accident of birth and the cobweb of many other evils like the dowry system, the female infanticide (leading to glaring disparity in gender ratio), the superstitious belief in some of the weird practices and the like. The Hindu society in the modern age cannot continue to be what it had been in the earlier period. The young Hindu bred and nurtured in modern scientific

environment may not take kindly to all that has come to be associated with a society which goes back to a hoary past. This putrid mass the society has to shed. The modern young Hindu may have nothing of it. That is his dilemma. Though not having an idea, an in-depth one at that, of his tradition, he cannot totally break loose from it. He finds himself just standing at the crossroads, a confused and a bewildered person groping for his identity!

Connected with the question of assertion of identity in modern Hindu society is the phenomenon of developing some order in it and not leave it as a conglomerate of sects and faiths with countless splinter organizations and associations for their promotion. The idea is developing now that these organizations and associations should be brought under one umbrella organization that may look for the welfare of the Hindus in general and not any particular section/sections thereof. The world Hindu Conferences are now being organized, the first one having taken place in New York, USA in 1986 and the second one in Kathmandu, Nepal in 1988. A kind of new awakening is overtaking the Hindu society with the desire to make its presence felt in the world community. With all its modernity, it still is very much traditional not only in the value system which of course is not bad but also in its beliefs, practices and way of life. It still clings to the past while living in the space age. It has its moorings in its thousands of years of history which has given it the resilience to hold on even against heaviest of the odds. It is responding to the changing times with its core intact which has been its strength down the centuries. It has endless divisions, yet is one, to be designated by the single term Hindu. It is old in maintaining its contact with the Vedic and the Purnic age in prayers, the mode of worship, the pantheon, the ritual, the practices, yet modern in education, in professions and the incorporation by it of the most sophisticated of the industrial and the technical knowhow. With all its contradictions and complexities it is an ongoing society with its rich past and hopefully, an equally rich future.

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II

Guru Gobind Singh— The Apostle of Human Brotherhood

So much has already been written on Guru Gobind Singh, the great redeemer of mankind, that nothing original can be expected from the pen of any contemporary writer. Still much can be and is actually being written on him simply because it is always sweet and pleasant to recount his glorious deeds, to retell his achievements and to remember with gratitude all that he did to uplift mankind from the morass into which it had fallen. Emperor Aśoka in one of his Edicts (Rock Edict XIV) says that he has repeated himself often in his Edicts simply because the idea conveyed was sweet and pleasant: *tasa tasa athasa mādhratāya*. The same can apply to Guru Gobind Singh too. We can afford to repeat ourselves in describing the greatness that he personified and the divine will which he represented. Guru Gobind Singh was sent by God Almighty to fulfil His mission on the earth. He himself records the fact in the 'Bachitra Natak':

*jyon tyon prabhu ham ko samajhāyo
main apanā sut tohi nivājāi
panth prachār karave kou sājā
jahi tahā te dharma chalāu
kubuddhi karan te lok haṭqu||*

ॐ

"The Lord somehow, brought me round and said I have anointed you as my son. I have commissioned you to spread the religion. Go then and propagate religion and turn away people from evil ways." The Master gives here in a nutshell the mission

that characterized his descent on the earth. It was "to propagate religion and to turn away people from evil." Mark here what the Lord says in the *Gītā*:

dharamasamsthāpanārthāya sambhāvamī yuge yuge!

"For the protection of the good, the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of true religion I am born on the earth again and again."

When Guru Gobind Singh took birth on the earth it had turned away from true religion. As Messiah he saw to it that it is brought to its even keel: that much of the overgrowth that had come into being round true religion is lumbered and the demoralization that had set in in contemporary society removed. With single-minded firmness he accomplished it even against heavy odds. He did away with the distinction between caste and caste and between religion and religion. He had before him the vision of one mankind, the brotherhood of the entire humanity. He admitted into his fold people from all religions. In the baptismal ceremony that he performed he asked the prospective members of the Khalsa to renounce three things first: Kulnas, Dharma Nas, Kritnas, caste, creed and previous actions. After they had renounced this, that he initiated them into the Khalsa. The divine messenger having the idea of the entire humanity before him also made no distinction between friend and foe. There is an interesting episode which typifies his lack of distinction among all beings and love for them. In the great siege of Anandpur Sahib some of the Sikhs came to him complaining that one of his followers Kanhaiya was giving water to adversaries. "How sweet, you have understood my message correctly, Kanhaiya," said the Guru.

It is with a view to giving a practical shape to his idea of one brotherhood that the Guru started the practice of community kitchens, in which people from all castes and all religions took their meals together. In the brotherhood of the Khalsa there was no place for any kind of distinction. All were equal in the eyes of the Guru who distributed his kindness to all alike. It was further with a view to removing the age-old concept of military activity

being restricted to a group of people only that he initiated people from all castes, people from even the so-called lower castes, into the science of military warfare. Many a disciple of his from these castes acquitted themselves gloriously in various battles much to the astonishment and wonder of the people from other castes. Guru Gobind Singh has shown to the people that no activity was the special preserve of any people. Given equality and consequent confidence they could ply the sword and the musket as effectively as the ploughshare and the sickle and wrest victory from the enemy. His concept of deg, teg and fateh was meant for all people from all castes and religions. It was the concept of equality among the people which no longer was to Guru Gobind Singh a puerile philosophic concept. He gave it a formal shape. With his noble mission of a people free from distinction he brought into being a revolutionary society. The people transformed by the alchemy of his touch had now come to realize in practical shape the age-old truth of the Upaniṣads *na mānuṣāc chreṣṭhataram hi kiñcit*,² that there is nothing superior to man.

It was again with a view to removing all distinctions in forms of worship that the Master enjoined on his disciples to worship only one God, the Timeless one, Akāl, and not to bow before any image or idol, sepulchre or grave.

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III

Indian Culture in the light of Sanskrit Language

For the study of ancient Indian culture, we have at our disposal a vast literature consisting of the Epics, the Purāṇas, the Arthaśāstra and other allied treatises. The memoirs of Buddhist pilgrims, the memoranda of foreign visitors, the inscriptions, the coins and the works of the court-poets are an additional source. All this is useful evidence, but never beyond question. Recorded history cannot claim to represent objective reality. The subjective element may vitiate the whole thing. There are not a few facts in history which are differently described by contemporary authorities and by actual observers. In the fight between Mahmud Khilji of Malwa and Rana Kumbha Karna of Mewar, each claimed a victory for himself. Mahmud raised a pillar of victory at Mandu near Dhar and the Rana commemorated it by a pillar at Chittor. Badauni describes the outcome of the battle at Haldighat as a victory for Akbar, but the writings on the walls of the temples of Udaipur speak of a victory for Pratap. Similarly the result of a battle at Mudki (Ferozepore) between the English and the Sikhs is differently told. The truth, therefore, lies obscured and buried under a thick crust of prejudice. The impressions of foreign visitors regarding the ways and manners of the ancient Indians may also be biased. A visitor may not have duly appreciated what he saw, may have partly or wholly misunderstood the life and thought of the people or wilfully misrepresented it. He may have an innate aversion for certain things and may have, therefore,

overlooked them. Or, he may have a strong liking for certain other things and may have, therefore, overdone the picture. Even an intelligent, vigilant and dispassionate observer may give us a version of things and happenings which may not be perfectly true. But facts gleaned from linguistics are unchallengeable. They stand out with an unobscurable perspicuity. The process of gleaning them is highly interesting. We, therefore, attempt to present a view of the Indian Culture as the study of the Sanskrit language affords us.

It is well-known that the ancient Indians dubbed non-Indians, men of other races, as impure. They gave them the name 'mlechha'. Let us see if this was a mere conceit or well-grounded, legitimate pride. Unless we assume that the Indians of yore lived close to water, making full and free use of it like aquatic birds, we cannot satisfactorily explain words like snātaka. In good old days, a young boy was entrusted to the care of a 'guru' with whom he lived a life of self-restraint for a number of years. During this period he developed his mind and body under the direction of his teacher, applying himself without distraction, to the various lores, sacred and secular. He always sought opportunities of service to the 'guru' to pay off, at least partly, the deep debt of gratitude he owed to him for the knowledge imparted so disinterestedly, ungrudgingly and devotedly. On the termination of his career as a student, he was given a sacred bath accompanied with *mantras* and then permitted to go back home. He was then designated vidyā-snātaka, vrata-snātaka or vidyā-vrata-snātaka, according as he had completed his course of studies, or his vow of celibacy or both. This designation attached to him all his life, before and after he had settled as a householder. This one act of bathing at a particular time and with a particular ceremony gave him a name for life, and his multifarious activities during his long stay at the Gurukula could not. What an association with water!

When they installed a prince on the royal throne, the ancients made him perform sacred ablutions with the water of the sacred rivers, poured out of golden vases, to the accompaniment of

chanting of Vedic *mantras*. To this process they gave the name *abhiṣeka* which literally means 'a bath'.

The English have the word coronation 'for the king-making ceremony'. Literally the word means 'putting a crown on'. The ancients too put a king-designate on the throne, adorned his head with a crown and invested him, likewise, with powers to administer the State. Then why this disparity in usage? It must have something to do with their mode of living. May we not say that it signifies that water predominated over other things so much so that it gave name and form to their ceremonies? Physical purity must have been an outstanding feature of the life of an Indian.

In Sanskrit we have *niṣṇāta* and *nadiṣṇa*, words for proficient, skilled, etc. Now these are derived from *√śnā*, to bathe, with the initial consonant cerebralized in the given sense. The underlying meaning is, doubtless, 'thoroughly bathed' which is conveyed by *niṣṇāta* and *nadiṣṇa*. The expression *niṣṇāta*, therefore, means 'proficient in the śāstra'. Now there is nothing to correspond to it in English. It would do violence to English idiom to say 'bathed' or 'thoroughly bathed' in knowledge or literature. We do hear of drinking and drinking deep at the fountain-head of knowledge. This may have a bearing on the prevalence of drinking amongst the English. Even to this day, they are a people more in love with drinking than with bathing. The expressions such as *pārāga* (lit. one who has crossed over to the other side) and *pārīṇa* are evidence of the fact that the Indians lived by the side of water. Here the *śāstra*, examination and query are all streams metaphorically. Words such as *anukūla*, *pratīpa* which mean 'agreeable to', 'opposed to', mean literally no more than 'along the bank', 'opposite to the bank of water'. The people deriving their idioms and metaphors from water were surely fond of it and, therefore, rightly proud of their physical purity.

The Sanskrit word for a teacher is *upādhyāya*. The word has been derived as *upetyādhīyate 'smāt* 'by approaching whom knowledge is acquired'. This, therefore, is quite significant inasmuch as it shows that it were the students who approached teachers for study and there was nothing analogous to the present

day tuition system where teachers go about knocking at the doors of their wards to teach them in return for a mere pittance. There was again no question of the students disobeying their teachers or disrespecting them. Many ancient texts proclaim that the relations between the teachers and the taught were the most cordial. Well, the same thing the bi-syllabic word *chātra* has to say. It has been explained as *chādayati doṣān guroḥ*, 'one who covers the faults of the teacher'. The conception of a student in ancient times was that of an umbrella over the head of the teacher protecting him from the onslaughts of detractors. When such was the conception of a student, where could arise then the necessity of students taking up positions against their teachers?

We now proceed to show the moral aspect of the ancient Indians' life. Morally, too, they were equally advanced. The name *avadya* which they gave to sin is significant. It literally means 'unspeakable'. The Indians of yore not only abhorred the commission of sin but also a reference to it. They did not afford to contaminate their tongue by speaking of sin. They believed, as the ancient writings tell us, that even a talk of sin was enough to condemn a man to hell. History tells us that theft was not known in ancient India. This is exactly what a single word *taskara* has to say. *Taskara* is a Sanskrit word for 'thief'. It connotes one who does 'that', viz., something which must not be named, it being so reprehensible. Expressions such as *sāptapādīna*, 'friendship formed by speaking seven words or walking seven steps together' point to their genuine sincerity and amiability. Surely it redounds to the credit of the people then that they could make friends so soon, while we moderns, with our much vaunted culture and civilization, do not, in spite of repeated contacts. Miserliness is condemned with one voice both by the revealed literature and the written law-books. Even today the sight of a miser in the morning is considered inauspicious by the Hindus. Now the very word *kṛpāṇa* (miser) reveals all this. Literally it means 'pitiable'. That this is its primary sense is amply shown by usage. The *Manusmṛti* (IV. 185) and the *Gītā* (2.49) read *kṛpāṇa* in this sense in the passages *duhitā kṛpāṇam param, kṛpāṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ*. Another equivalent of

kṛpaṇa is *kadarya* which, when broken up, means a 'contemptible owner', *kutsito 'ryaḥ*. That a miser was given this name is enough condemnation. He was cried down as an unhappy man who, though rich enough, could not spend to make his life comfortable.

Other synonyms of *kṛpaṇa* are *nakhaṃpaca* and *mitaṃpaca* which, when broken up, mean cooking limited or nail-much of food. These words have their origin in the quantity of food cooked in the miser's household for his own consumption. This is well against the social ethics of the ancient Indians. Food is not only meant for oneself, it is to be shared with many, the guests, the Brāhmaṇas, the servants, the birds or the insects. If a person eats his food alone, he eats sin alone (*kevalāgho bhavati kevalādi*). *Arāti*, a word for enemy, is also a pointer in the same direction. *Arāti* signifies a person who gives nothing in charity. *Rāti* is a gift. A person, who did not contribute a part of his income to improve the society as a whole, was looked upon as an enemy. What condemnation of miserliness could be more contemptuous and caustic!

In Islam usury is strictly prohibited. Ancient Indians, too, looked down upon it. The word for interest in Sanskrit is *kusīda* which is itself more eloquent than any indictment of it. It means *kutsitam sīdanty atra* where people come to occupy a contemptible state. It is this that leads to the debasement of the people. The word *kausīdya* formed from *kusīda* means indolence, laziness. This is typical of the profession of usury where the money-lender has nothing else to do than to earn his living by exploiting the needy. He being a parasite makes no effort for earning his livelihood.

He passes his time in a leisurely way. So the word *kausīdya* meaning originally the profession of usury has come to mean, ironically enough, laziness or indolence.

The ancient Indians believed in bird-omens, auspicious or inauspicious marks, etc., as other ancient people did. The word for omen is *śakuna* which is also a word for a bird. It, therefore, needs not much of imagination to see that they believed in the cries and movements of birds as communications of the future. As for the belief in marks, words like *jāyāghna* (in *jāyāghnas*

tilakālakah) formed by Pāṇ III. 2.52.53 may be instanced. That they believed in the power of spells to win one's heart, is indicated by the phrase *hr̥dyo mantrah* where *hr̥dya* is derived by the rule *bandhane carṣau* (Pāṇ. IV. 4.96). J. 2. 6

We may here deal with a few other aspects of ancient Indians who had a very simple dress, consisting of two clothes, the upper, *uttariya* and the lower, *upasaṁvyāna* garments. The word for dress is always used in the dual even for a royal personage. Cp. *manorame na vyavasiṣṭa vastre* said of king Daśaratha (*Bhaṭṭi*, III. 26). At the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom was presented with an *udgamanīya* which was nothing but a pair of washed clothes. Now, the fact that the people of old did not use much of cloth or were not heavily clad, as the moderns are, is revealed by the word *kuvinda*, a weaver. Formed by the Vārtika *gavādiṣu vindeḥ saṁjñāyām* the word means one who gets a scanty living. Now, if the people would have used a plenty of clothing, the weaver could not be called *kuvinda* with any justification. It would be also interesting to know if the ancients had the shaving saloons as in the west. We say no. *Janaṅgama* is one of the words for a barber. It means one who approaches people (to do a shave). If the people approached the barber for the purpose, as they do now, the word would lose all propriety. The *śāstras* interdict shaving by night. This is what *divākīrti*, another name for barber, says. A barber was so called for he was a subject of talk by day only and never by night. The plain meaning is that he was not thought of at night, for his services were not required at the time.

That the ancient Indians were people of aesthetic taste, can be known from the well-known word *pravīṇa* which means originally *prakṛṣṭo vīṇāyām* 'one who is an expert in playing on the lyre'. The word developed a secondary meaning of *clever*, or *expert* later. An expert in lyre is the real expert, so the ancients thought.

Let us consider what constituted the staple food of the people. At present wheat is the normal food of the Indians of the North and rice of those of the South. In ages gone by rice was the staple food of the Indians even of the North. This is evidenced by the

fact that lexicographers read anna and andhas amongst the words for food. Bhakta and andhas are not synonymous at all with anna (food). Then why are they listed along with anna, bhojya, etc.? The conclusion is irresistibly forced on us that rice was the principal article of food. If it were otherwise, bhakta and andhas, the particular forms of food, would not be read along with words for food in general. Pāṇini's term bahuvrīhi for the attributive compound is also illuminating. It means 'one in possession of plenty of rice'. It is remarkable since Pāṇini belonged to the North-West, being a native of Śālātura. Rice must be the staple food even of the Northerners in the days of Pāṇini.

Besides rice, the other food with which the people of old were most familiar was the sesamum seeds, the tilas. The forehead mark is called tilaka 'tila-pratikṛtiḥ tilakaḥ'. This is the meaning of tilaka. It is on account of its similarity with tila that it is so called. A mole is also called tila. This, too, is on the analogy of tila, the sesamum seed. It is human psychology that whenever we come upon a thing similar to those already known, we name it after the thing with which we are most familiar. This is further evidenced by the word taila which means 'oil'. Primarily it means oil extracted out of the tilas. Secondly it comes to signify oil in general. We can say sarṣapataila, inguditaila. The word tila in the words noted above is certainly not without significance.

Let us now see what attitude the ancient Indians had towards worldly possessions. It is generally held that they very early turned their back upon the world and its possessions, being deeply impressed with their transitoriness. This is far from the truth. Linguistic evidence refutes such a view. The Sanskrit word dhanya is eloquent. It is a word for 'blessed'. It is derived from dhana with the suffix ya in the sense of 'one who grows rich'. (Vide Pāṇini, ghanagaṇam labdhā, IV. 4.84). Later it developed a secondary sense, 'blessed', and was extended to denote a person equally happy or devoted to the practice of virtue. This development must be traced back to the time when the people looked upon a rich man as a happy man. If it were not so, the application of the word to happy or blessed persons would be void of sense.

The same information is yielded by words śreṣṭhin and sādhu. Śreṣṭhin means *śreṣṭham asyāsti*. Here we have the *matvarthīya* *ini* suffix in the sense of praise or acclamation, *praśamsā*. 'One who is blessed with the best' is then the meaning of śreṣṭhin. Now, what is the best? Why is it not named? Well, it is so well-known. It is money. Similarly, sādhu means originally good, righteous. It later develops a secondary meaning. In Hindi it is still in vogue in the form of *sāhū*. The word, sādhu is a pointer to the times when moneyed people were regarded good, good for economic activity so essential for the healthy living of society. But here it must be understood that whereas merchants and the traders were the good people, the sādhus, the persons hoarding wealth for the sake of it were heavily at a discount. The Indians in ancient times had very early foreseen the dangers of concentration of wealth in a few hands. When any hoards of coins come to be deposited in the safe-vaults of a handful of capitalists, there arises a danger to society. The leaders of society look at this development with suspicion and alarm. In Sanskrit the god of wealth is given the name of Kubera which, when dissolved, means *kutsitam beram asya*. The word bera means 'body'. One whose body is contemptible is Kubera. In the Hindu pantheon the Lord of wealth is regarded as a leper. Again, one of the names of Kubera is Naravāhana which means one who has a man as his conveyance. A man riding a man! Well, this is what a capitalist does. He can amass huge wealth only by depriving others of their rightful share. A man himself, he crushes other men. The Mahābhārata (I. 140.77) says:—

nācchitvā paramarmāṇi, nākṛtvā karma dāruṇam |
nāhatvā matsyaghātīva prāpnoti mahatīm śriyam ||

Now a word about metaphysics. The Sāṅkhya philosophers postulate that the soul is unrelated (*asaṅgo vai pūruṣaḥ*). The same view is accepted in the Gītā. This, however, can be known without a study of the Sāṅkhya Sūtras or the Gītā. The word duḥkha alone is informative enough. This tiny little word is a compound made up of duḥ, 'bad', 'defective' and kha, the senses. It therefore literally means a state in which the senses are undermined, overwhelmed

or defective. This is exactly how suffering reacts on the senses. This in plain English means that the ancient Indians who spoke Sanskrit, believed in the Sāṅkhya doctrine that all suffering (*duḥkha*) was confined to the senses, leaving the soul quite unaffected.

Throughout our literature, we are called upon to divert our minds from the objects of the senses, the *viśayas*. The objects hold men in their grip and it is emphasised times without number that we should strive hard to keep off them, which is undoubtedly the most difficult task. That the attraction of the objects of the senses is irresistible can be known not only from the scriptures but also from the word *viśaya* itself. *Viśaya* is a compound of *vi* and *saya* from the *√ṣiñ* 'to bind' *√viśeṣeṇa-sinvanti* (= *badhnanti*) *iti viśayaḥ*. *Viśayas* are so called because they bind one tightly. The ancient Indians could not have given a better word to the objects of the senses.

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IV

Śapathas in Ancient Sanskrit Texts: A Material Source For Culture

A study in depth of the *Śapathas* vows or pledges, in Sanskrit is indeed revealing. The *Śapathas* are indirect description of the culture of the ancient Indians, their profession and practice, their thoughts and observances. They are the spontaneous outpourings of the ancients, their solemn declarations intended to convince the hearer of the sincerity, resolution or earnestness of the speaker, and as such free from the taint of affection or hypocrisy. That some of these *Śapathas* later took the form of edicts or injunctions in the Sūtras and the Smṛtis, shows that they were deep-rooted in the soil. In the present article, we shall confine ourselves to the Śapathas as contained in the *Rāmāyaṇa*¹ and the *Padmapurāṇa*.²

On his return from *Kekaya*, *Bharata*, who knew nothing of the tragic happenings that took place in his absence, sees mother *Kausalyā* who taunts him saying: "You coveted the kingdom of *Ayodhyā* and your mother *Kaikeyī* has secured it for you. *Rāma*, clad in hermit's clothes has been sent into exile for fourteen years". This cuts *Bharata* to the quick. He promptly proceeds to assure *Kausalyā* of his innocence and non-involvement in the heinous crime committed. He takes a number of oaths, the nature and content of which we shall presently discuss here threadbare.

Bharata repeats with all the emphasis at his command that he is perfectly innocent and does not deserve censure. He swears: "Let my mind not conform to the scriptures learnt by me, if my

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honoured brother, ever true to his word, has left for the woods as desired by me" (2.75.21). Let me be in the service of the ignoble, commit the sin of urinating in the direction of the sun and kick the cow, if ... (22). Let me incur the sin that an employer commits when he has made an employee do an arduous task for him, without paying for it, if ... (23). Let me incur the sin that a ruler does, who enjoys a share of one-sixth of the produce, but fails to protect his subjects, if ... (25). Let me incur the sin that a ruler does, when he pledges Ḍakṣinā to the performers of a Satra (a prolonged sacrifice) and later declines, if ... (26). Let me forget the abstruse truth taught me by my tutor and thus turn wicked, if ... (28). Let me kick the cow, decry teachers and hurt my friends, if ... (31). Let me be guilty of divulging something said in dispraise of someone in secret, if ... (32). Let me be guilty of ingratitude and thus be exposed to public obloquy, if ... (33). Let me be guilty of partaking of savoury dishes all alone, when I am in the presence of slaves, servants, and children at my residence, if ... (34). Let me go without issue, all my life, and thus be in distress, if ... (36). Let me be held captive, while fleeing for life, when the war is on, the dreadful enemy facing me, if ... (39). Let my mind be not induced to piety, but be swayed by vice, and let me make gifts to the underserving, if ... (42). Let me lie in bed for the period of the two twilights and thus be a sinner, if ... (44). Let me be guilty of the sin of one who burns public property, has sexual intercourse with the Guru's wife and plots against his friend; if ... (45). Let me not do worship to the gods and the manes and render no service to my parents, if ... (46). Let me fall apart this very day, from the regions of the noble, the renown of the noble and the deeds of the noble, if ... (47). Let me give up service of my mother and pursue vicious pursuits, if ... (48). Let me pass a life of constant worry, suffering from many an ailment and failing to provide for a number of servants depending on me, if ... (49). Let me frustrate the hopes and expectations of the humble and the needy, looking up to me for help; if ... (50). Let me revel in chicanery, be dishonest and malicious and ever afraid of the king, if ... (51). Let me commit the sin of neglecting my wife,

who approaches me, when she has had a wash after menstruation, if ...(52). Let me incur the sin of a Brāhmaṇa who discards his wife, after she has borne him children, if ... (53). Let me stand in the way of reverence being done to a Brahmana and milk a cow with a new-born calf, if ...(54). Let me neglect my lawfully wedded wife and have marital relations with another's wife and thus give up my devotion to duty, if ...(55). Let me incur the sin of one who pollutes drinking water and administers poison (to others), if ...(56). Let me commit the sin of denying water to a thirsty person who asks for water, if ...(57). Let me incur the sin of those two, who owing allegiance to the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva cults dispute the superiority of devotion to Viṣṇu over Śiva and vice versa while I stand aloof and do not attempt to pacify them by showing them the oneness of Viṣṇu and Śiva (58).

Likewise in the Padmapurāṇa, there are a number of most opportune and purposeful pledges, wherein the one warrior avows his strength and valour to vanquish and kill the other and offers in all solemnity to suffer the condign punishment in case he fails to fulfil any. These too make an interesting study. Let us share them with the reader.

Puṣkala, son of Bharata, who is guarding the sacrificial horse, now captured and driven away by Damana, son of Subāhu, says addressing Damana: "Let gloom descend upon me which does on a son who looks upon something else more adorable than the feet of his mother and consequently acts against her (5.24.15). Again addressing Citrāṅga, he declares: If I fail to shoot you dead by this arrow of mine, let me be consigned to the dark regions under the control of Yama, like one who outrages the chastity of a woman adorned with good conduct and character (27.31-32). Thus challenged, Citrāṅga solemnly affirms: "If I do not dash to pieces your arrow aimed at me, let me incur the sin of one who discourages a person intent on going on a pilgrimage and who considers any other fast more sanctifying than the one on the eleventh day of lunar month (27.36-37)." In response Puṣkala reiterates: "Let me be able to keep my word if I have worshipped the feet of Rāma with a sincere heart. Let me fulfil my pledge in

the fight (with the enemy), if I am faithful to my wife and recognize no other, (27.40-41)."

Called upon to make solemn declarations by Śatrughna, the heroes readily obeyed and Puškala was the first to declare: "If I do not make the Daitya Vidyumālin faint by the sharp shafts shot from my bow and collapse with his dishevelled hair covering his head, I should incur the sin of sharing the daughter's property (*Kanyā-dhana*) and reviling the gods. If I do not fulfil my pledge, let me be a sinner like one who makes a distinction between Viṣṇu and Śiva and between Pārvatī and Lakṣmī (33.35-35). Lakṣminidhi, son of Janaka follows. He declares: "If I turn my back upon the enemy, let me commit the sin of hearing the censure of the Vedas and yet remaining quiet or approving it in the heart and thus say good-bye to all the sacred laws. Let me misbehave myself like a Brāhmaṇa who sells liquids like ghee and oil and lac, and who sells a cow, being covetous of money. Let me behave like one who drinks from a well belonging to the Mlecchas and does not perform expiatory rites, if I turn my back upon the enemy" (33.41-43). Hanumat then stands up and boldly announces: "By the grace of Raghunātha and Jānakī, there is nothing in the world that I cannot accomplish. If I fail short of this pledge, let me forfeit my devotion to Rāma. Let me sin if I fail to keep my word, like a Śūdra who feeds a Kapilā cow to avail himself of her milk. Let me also sin by drinking wine, which even by its smell and touch sends a person to the Raurava hell, if I do not keep my pledge" (33.49-52). Śatrughna addressing his heroes declares: "If I do not knock down with my arrows the head of Vidyumālin torn asunder from his body, let me incur the sin of a false witness of stealer of gold and a vilifier of the Brāhmaṇas" (33.57.58).

Let us first examine the *Śapathas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and see what light they shed on the culture of the times. Reading in between the lines, we observe that Bharata makes a very weighty statement, *mā bhūt śāstrānugā buddhiḥ* (2.75.21) giving us an idea of how the ancients thought of a life divorced from the scriptural injunctions. He looks upon it as heinously sinful as his suspected abetment in getting Rāma exiled. According to his

statement servility itself was a bane and much more servility to the wicked (*praiṣyaṁ pāpīyasām*) (22). The sun and the cow were objects of worship. Nobody would incur the odium of urinating, while facing the sun, and none would dare kick the cow. We have this idea in a more developed form in *Gau.dh.su.* 1.9.13: *na vāyavagniviprādityāpo devatā gāś ca pratipaśyan vā mūtrapurīṣā-medhyān vyudasyet*. It was obnoxious to the ancient Indian to get the service of a person without paying him wages. It was an act of cruelty (*nairghṛṇya*) (23). That a king could not claim one-sixth part of the produce without looking after the welfare of his subjects was a belief firmly held by the people. To them he was the worst sinner. Manu has it in a more developed form, widening the area of the king's merits and demerits. Says he:

*sarvato dharmāṣaḍbhāgo rājño bhavati rakṣataḥ |
adharmād api ṣaḍbhāgo bhavaty asya hy arakṣataḥ ||* (8.304)

Herein we find a downright condemnation of a person who starts unlearning the lores he has learnt earlier from his tutor (28). The ancients rightly denounced this trend, as they thought it would lead to degeneration. The grim consequences were duly realized by the authors of the Sūtras. Says the sage Āpastamba: *niveśe nivṛtte saṁvatsare saṁvatsare dvau dvau māsau samāhita ācāryakule vaset bhūyaḥ śrutim icchann iti śvetaketuḥ* (1.13.19). The sage distinctly perceives the danger of relapse in ignorance, if pursuit of knowledge was discontinued. But Manu and Āpastamba call a person forgetting the Veda by the name of *brahmojjha*. Bhārata condemns ingratitude and calls it a shameless act. It is indeed a besetting sin for which there is no atonement. An ungrateful man is doomed. Sins like killing the cow, drinking wine, thieving, violating the vow of celibacy, etc. may be atoned for, but not the sin of ingratitude, says the Rāmāyaṇa:

*goghne caiva surāpe ca caure bhagnavrate tathā |
niṣkṛtiḥ kathitā sadbhiḥ kṛtaghne nāsti niṣkṛtiḥ ||* (4.34.12)

Share your meals with your dependants by your side is the call of Indian culture. Manu endorses this call when he enjoins

ekah svādu na bhuñjīta (4.4). The *R̥gveda* (X. 117.6) reads: *kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī*, which in plain English means: He eats sin who eats alone. Fleeing from the battlefield, when one is faced by the enemy was deemed a great sin (39). Gautama in his Sūtra (2.1.16) upholds it saying: *saṁgrāme saṁsthānam anivṛttiś ca. Saṁsthāna* here means death. Lavishing of gifts on the undeserving was not blessed, but cursed. Apastamba emphasizes, *pratipādayitā ca tīrthe* (2.20.19). One should help the deserving and the needy (only) with gifts. Manu describes gifts to the undeserving saying: a man giving charity to the undeserving verily sails in a boat of stone and is, therefore, drowned (*yathā plavenaupalena nimajjaty udake taran*, etc.) (4.194). Rising from the bed before the sun ~~was~~ up and not lying in bed when the sun is sinking was the salient feature of the Indian life. Non-observance of this rule of conduct was looked down upon as a great sin. So grievous was the aberration that Bharata had to include it in the inventory of sins he would have committed, had he managed the exile of his honoured brother, Rāma. Manu notices this sin when he says: *taṁ ced abhyudiyāt sūryaḥ śayanām kāmācārataḥ nimloce vāpi*, etc. (2.220). As the pupil lived with his guru as a member of his family, there was the possibility, though remote, that he, (the pupil) might be tempted to make a criminal assault on the guru's wife. It was emphasized again and again that such a sin was the most reprehensible, the most heinous. Associated with the institution of tutelage it was universally condemned and looked upon with abhorrence. On account of its gravity, it was ranked as one of the Mahāpātakas, such as *brahmahatyā*. Manu recounts the Mahāpātakas in 11.54. Service to the mother was considered most meritorious and failure on the part of the son in this respect most degrading (48). Manu brings out the towering greatness of the mother when he says: "The pains that the mother takes in fostering her children cannot be repaid even in the course of hundreds of years" (2.227). Keeping away from the wife when she has had a wash after menstruation was considered an unpardonable sin (52). It was tantamount to the killing of the foetus in the womb. On this Devala reads:

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*yat svadārān ṛtusnātān svasthaḥ sanī apagacchatī
brahmahatyām avāpnoti garbham prāptam vināśya saḥ॥*

This shows that the ancient Indian was so much interested in progeny, in the propagation of the race that he looked upon this deliberate neglect of an opportunity to procreate as a great sin of omission. Divorce was unknown to the ancient Indian. Repudiation of the lawfully wedded wife was unthinkable. It is said here of the Brāhmaṇa; it was true of all the four classes (53). The oneness of the god Viṣṇu and Śiva was recognized and he who distinguished the one from the other was decried. It was later that sectarian disputes arose in this regard.

After this brief survey of the *Śapathas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, let us now turn to those we come across in the *Padmapurāṇa*. They too make an interesting study and give us glimpses of the culture of the times. Puṣkala's declaration has its own significance. It says in so many words that he who adores some one else more than the feet of his mother, invites gloom upon him, viz., he loses clarity of judgement. That spells his ruin. This shows what a horror the ancient Indian had of the dereliction in the performance of his duty to the mother (5.24.15). In another declaration of his, he tells us that a man guilty of adultery would have to go to the dark region of Yama and suffer all sorts of torture (27.31-32). On adultery Manu observes:

*nahīdṛśam amānuṣyaṁ loke kiñcana vidyate
yādṛśam puruṣasyeha parādāropasevanam॥ (4.134)*

In Citrāṅga's words to discourage and dissuade from going on a pilgrimage was as sinful in the eyes of the people as transgression of any other sacred law. If it were not so, Citrāṅga's words would have no meaning. Puṣkala reiterates: Let me keep my word, if I am faithful to my wife and recognize no other". Coming from a warrior, this speaks of the nobility of thought of the Kṣatriya class, a rare virtue in the martial rank and file. Called upon to make solemn declarations by Śatrughna, Puṣkala refers to the sin of sharing the daughter's property (*Kanyādhana*). The ancient Indian who looked upon his daughter as *parakīyo 'rthaḥ* could hardly think of sharing her property vouchsafed to her by

her in-laws. Manu clearly condemns this sharing of property when he says:

strīdhanāni tu ye mohād upajīvanti bandhavaḥ |
... te pāpā yānty adhogatim (3.52) ||

Lakṣmīnidhi, son of Janaka, in his long-drawn declaration tells us that a warrior turning his back upon the enemy commits so many sins. To listen to the censure of the Veda and remain undisturbed or relish it in one's heart was one of them. This surely was not the way of the faithful. The Veda was held in the highest esteem by all believers in God. In fact, a detractor of the Veda was as good as an atheist, *nāstiko vedanindakaḥ* is Manu's pronouncement. We are further told here that selling of a cow, particularly by a Brāhmaṇa, was a sinful act which would condemn him in the eyes of the public, as one avaricious of money. Hanumat's declaration is peculiar in itself. To him devotion to Lord Rāma is the be-all and end-all of his life. "If I fail to keep my pledge, let me lose my devotion to Raghunātha." In his added declaration he says that the Śūdra had no right to keep a cow, especially, the *kapilā* for the supply of milk for himself, the *kapilā* being reserved for the Brāhmaṇas. Hanumat also condemns the use of liquor, the smell and touch of which is enough to send a man to hell (33.49-52). Śatrughna, the leader of the troop of guards accompanying the sacrificial horse makes a very solemn declaration from which we learn that the ancient Indians held submission of false evidence in the court, stealing of gold and vilifying of Brāhmaṇas as sinful acts. Manu lays down that false evidence (*kauṭa sākṣya*) is an Upapātaka (11.55) next to the Mahāpātakas such as *brāhmahatyā* enumerated in 11.54. Puṣkala tell us that belief in the sanctity of the Gaṅgā was as common then as now. A dip in it was believed to have the efficacy of purging a man of his sins (42.68).

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V

Bhoodan the Ancient Concept : Its Application in Modern Socio-economic context

e/ It is popularly believed that the concept of Bhoodan is a recent one. Acharya Vinoba Bhave is said to be the author of this concept which aims at silent revolution in the countryside. the basic principle underlying this concept is that land is a natural gift just as are air and water. Every one has a right to own land. It is a sign of social maladjustment that these days this natural gift is found to be the monopoly of a handful of persons. The concentration of big blocks of land in a few hands is deplorable at all times. This is what is responsible for the division of society into landlords and the land-less.

X To solve the problem of Zamindari legal machinery has been or is being set into motion at governmental level. In most of the States Zamindari has been abolished by law. In others the Zamindari bills are on the legislative anvil. But in a country like India the problem of land is so colossal and intricate that it cannot be solved by legislative measures alone. Peoples' conscience has to be roused to the evil of the concentration of land in a few hands and if possible they have to be mentally so conditioned that they may part with a chunk of their land readily and voluntarily. This is the Gandhian technique. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi if any one of us concentrates wealth more than what is required for his subsistence he deprives others of their rightful share. A proper approach has to be made to such a person so that he may get rid of

the surplus with him and share it with his fellow citizens. Acharya Vinoba's concept of Bhoodan aims at this very thing. It also has the element of love in it. If land is forcibly taken away from a man it is possible and perhaps natural too for him to feel a wrench for it or nurse a grievance against the government of the country or the land-less among whom his land would be distributed. If he himself parts with his land, he will feel happy and derive mental satisfaction out of his gift. But it is not always easy to part with a thing, more so, with land which to an Indian Zamindar means so much. He can do so only through persuasion or love. This is what Vinobaji aimed to do.

If we just have a look at our ancient literature we are rather struck with the fact that Bhoodan is extolled there. The concept of Bhoodan is, therefore, not at all new. Simply its application to the modern conditions is Vinobaji's innovation. The gift of land is highly spoken of in ancient works like the *Mahābhārata* wherein it is expressly stated that the gift of land sublimates both him who gives land and him who receives it. One of the ancient names of the earth, as the great epic says, is 'Priyadattā'.¹ This is so because its gift or its acceptance is always dear to people. Again, in the context of the various gifts enumerated in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* it is stated that the gift of land far outweighs gifts of other kinds. Land yields many things and by its gift one can enable others to eke out their living from it.²

Apart from literary evidence inscriptions are a highly valuable source for tracing the history of the concept of Bhoodan in ancient India. These are historical records and in more cases than one are dated. They are records of land-grants or in some cases of village-grants. They mention the boundaries of the pieces of land or the donated villages invariably. Generally such donated lands are exempt from land revenue or other similar levies.³ Grantees are generally the scholars or the learned *Brāhmaṇas*. It is interesting to note that the colophon to each inscription contains a strong warning for those who may seek to interfere now or ever with the gifts. In one or two inscriptions the donor who happens to be a king has uttered a strict warning that if people, be they his

successors, ever take away the gift, then he would take care to burn them even though he may have assumed another form⁴. In records like the Dhanaidāh Copper Plate Inscription of the Gupta year 113 and Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription of Budhagupta of the Gupta Year 163 an imprecatory verse is found towards the end, which says that a person who gives land lives happily for sixty thousand years in heaven but one who interferes with it, lives exactly the same number of years in hell. Not only that, he along with his forefathers crawls in filth and dirt.⁵ Elsewhere too forcible occupation of donated land or abetment of this crime is condemned in the strongest possible language.⁶ It appears the ancient Indians had quite early foreseen the dangers to which the donated lands could be exposed. The grantees often being persons devoted to learning or engaged in peaceful pursuits were not able to defend themselves against those who either took back their lands or forcibly occupied them even though they might be donated by others. To deter them from this nefarious activity imprecations are uttered. It was clearly understood that the gift of land is as important as the preservation of it. The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription of the time of Kumārgupta of the Gupta Year 128 and other inscriptions quote a verse from the Mahābhārata which says just the same thing. Yudhiṣṭhira is asked there to see to it that the donated lands remain with the donees for the protection of land is much more important than its gift.⁷

It would thus be seen that the concept of Bhoodan is not new to India. The genius of India had evolved it fairly early. It is therefore not merely an accident that Acharya Vinoba Bhave is born in India. And this also is not an accident that his appeal for donation of land met with such a phenomenal success. In no other country could this have been possible. The Bhoodan movement has been accepted so very naturally in India. It has excited her, there is a ferment in the country but strangely enough it has not amazed her just as it has done the foreigners who are simply wonder-struck at the slow and silent revolution taking place in the country. From times immemorial Indians have been willing to part with their lands or villages for the needy. They thought they found

religious merit (*punya*) in it. Now they find that Bhoodan is a doubly meritorious act, because, apart from religious merit, it relieves human suffering and social disparity. By giving land voluntarily they are ennobled mentally and spiritually.

'Sampattidāna' and 'Kūpadāna'⁸ are merely the cut roads to Bhoodan. A landless peasant must be enabled, Vinobaji says, to buy seeds, manure, agricultural implements and a pair of bullocks. The gift of land in itself is good. But without the necessary means to cultivate it, it may degenerate into a liability. So Vinobaji, as an afterthought it would seem, propounded the concepts of 'Sampattidāna' and 'Kūpadāna'. This Sampattidāna has been an age-old custom in India, although wealth used to be given for different purposes. All the same, the concept of Sampattidāna was there. The stories of Raghu, Rantideva and Harṣa, to mention only a few, are constant reminders of the noble tradition when kings used to give everything in charity and reduced themselves to paupers. But apart from kings and princes with whom it may appear different, the common people with ordinary means used to come forward in ancient times to give in charity a part of whatever they had. The idea of *dāna* had been very popular in ancient India. Dharmaśāstras, one after another proclaim virtue in it. The high and low must give. Wealth is not a thing to be hoarded or kept secure in the safe-vaults of the capitalists. It must flow back to the masses. This too much insistence upon *dāna* or liberal charities must have been conceived by our ancient forbears as an effective all-time antidote to the evil of the concentration of wealth in a few hands which must lead to undesirable consequences. It is a tribute to their sagacity that they quite early foresaw the dangers inherent in a society where the captains of industry and agriculture keep their money to themselves and do not share it with their less fortunate brethren. If economic disparity had not been continuously remedied in this way, our society which goes back to thousands of years must have witnessed quite early in its career the Bolshevik bloodbath with all its attendant problems. But by formulating the theory of Dāna (voluntary giving away of money or wealth) the economic and political thinkers of ancient India put

an effective check on the violent activities in the country. That is why the mighty edifice of our society has withstood through the ages many an onslaught on it with remarkable success. Cracks have appeared here and there, but the basic structure has remained as it was thousands of years ago. The concepts of Sampattidāna and Kūpadāna (the digging of wells for others), have been torn by Vinobaji from their contexts. He has given them a new meaning. Wealth and wells are now to be given for agricultural purposes, for cultivation of the lands which have been gifted to the landless by the landowners.

The consummation of Bhoodan appears in "Grāmadāna", the gift of a village. This aims at the kind of society where there is no private ownership of land. It belongs to the community as a whole and is administered by the village council or the Panchayat on behalf of all the residents in the village. In ancient India villages or Agrahāras as they were called in land-grants used to be endowed either to the educational institutions or the temples. The ownership of the village rested in these only. The income from the village went to support these institutions and it was a permanent income. Now, this concept of the grant of villages to educational or other types of institutions comes very near the concept of Grāmadāna of Vinobaji. In both these ownership of land does not vest in the individual tiller. The development of the village is a co-operative endeavour. A part of the income from the village goes in both these to the village school or the place of worship. But the essential difference between the old and the new modes of village-grants is the application of the old concept to the new situation. Vinobaji has put forward this Grāmadāna as a permanent solution to the problem of Zamindari. In it lies its novelty. Otherwise it is an old concept the antiquity of which goes far back into the forgotten ages.

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dānam vāpyathavādānam*

nāmāsyāḥ prathamapriyam.|| XIII.62.12.

2. *atidānāni sarvāṇi pṛthivīdānam ucyate |
acalā hy akṣayā pṛthvī dogdhṛī kāmān ihottamān.*||

XIII.62.2

3. Vide—*Akaradāyī abhaṭacchatraprāveśyaḥ*, II (Regnal Year 19).
4. *tad asya kulotthair matpiṇḍopajīvibhir vā kālāntareṣv api na
vyāghātaḥ kāryaḥ/ evam ājñapte yo 'nyathā kuryāt tam aham
dehāntaragato 'pi mahatā' 'vadhyānena nirddaheyam*—Khoh
Copper Plate Inscription of Mahārāja Hastin of the year 163.
5. *ṣaṣṭim varṣasahasrāṇi svarge modati bhūmidah |
ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake vaset ||
svadattām paradattām vā yo hareta vasundharām |
sa viṣṭhāyām kṛmir bhūtvā pītṛbhiḥ saha pacyate ||*
6. e.g., in the *Mahābhārata*—*pūrvadattām haran bhūmiḥ narakā-
yopagacchati*, XIII.62.74.
7. *pūrvadattām dvijātibhyo yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira |
mahīm matimatām śreṣṭha dānāc chreyonupālanam ||*
8. The digging of wells for drinking and other purposes was
considered a meritorious act, vide—*pānīyaṁ paramaṁ dānam
ity evaṁ manur abravīt |
tasmāt kūpānś ca vāpīś ca tadāgāni ca khānayet ||*
Mahābhārata, Anuśāsanaparvan, 65.3.

VI. HUMAN VALUES: A MIRROR TO INDIAN CULTURE

1

Satya

Indian tradition has laid emphasis on *satya* or truth since times immemorial. Preparatory to his pupil returning to his home to take up the duties of a householder on completion of his period of Vedic education, his teacher gave him parting advice. We have a specimen of it in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*. This is the first available indication of what can be described in modern terminology as the Convocation Address. The very first piece of advice that the teacher gives his pupil is that he should speak the truth: *satyam vada*.¹ Enumerating the things that he should not neglect while continuing with his advice, he mentions truth: *satyān na pramaditavyam*,² let there be no neglect of truth. The Upaniṣadic seers know it full well that it is very difficult to keep to truth. The glitter of gold is far too distracting to turn a person away from it: *hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham*,³ the face of truth is covered with a golden disc.⁴ They implore the Lord to unveil it for them so that they, who love truth, may see it: *tan me pūṣann apāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye*.⁵

The *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* declares that it is truth alone that triumphs, *satyam eva jayati*⁶ and that it is through *satya* that the path that leads to divinity opens up: *satyena panthā vitato devayānah*.⁷

The *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*⁸ includes *satya* among the ten *yamas* or great moral and religious observances the constant practice of which is a must, as says *Manu*: *yamān seveta satatam*.⁹

A stanza in the *Rāmāyaṇa* assigns to *satya* or truth a place higher than even a thousand *Aśvamedhas*, horse sacrifices:

*aśvamedhasaharam ca satyam ca tulayā dhṛtaṁ
aśvamedhasahasrād dhi satyam eva viśiṣyate*¹⁰

“If a thousand Aśvamedhas and satya, truth were to be put in the scale, satya would weigh heavier than the thousand Aśvamedhas”. Aśvamedha is that sacrifice which is described in the scriptures as the king of sacrifices, kraturāt and the remover of all sins: sarvapāpaprāṇodanaḥ. If this is the situation with one Aśvamedha, how much more would it be with a thousand of them? Truth is said to transcend even the thousand.

It is not surprising that the stanza should occur in the Rāmāyaṇa. The work is a saga of the upholding of truth. Daśaratha had promised two boons to Kaikeyī who had asked for them at the crucial moment when he had already announced the coronation of Rāma. The boons asked were the coronation of Bharata in place of Rāma and the exile of the latter to a forest for fourteen years. Though he had promised the boons, Daśaratha did not have the heart to grant them when asked for, when face to face with Rāma. He did not say anything, *anukto 'py atrabhavatā*,¹¹ he just kept mum. It was Kaikeyī who conveyed to him everything. It did not take long for Rāma to get into the intricacy of the situation. He decided without even a second thought to save the truth for his father; that was what Kaikeyī also had told him, *satyena mahatā Rāma tārayasva nareśvaram*,¹² and volunteered to relinquish the throne and repair to forest. His father had not told him to do anything of the kind. There was no question of any disobedience to him, therefore. As a matter of fact, he had resisted all the pleading and persuasion of Lakṣmaṇa and Kausalyā; the latter even going to the extent of saying that her position as mother was superior to that of the father and that she orders him not to do anything of the kind that Kaikeyī wants him to. Rāma knew that his father had promised two boons and that he had to keep his promise. Otherwise he would be untruthful. He did not want that stigma to attach to him. He had to uphold the truth, he being described to Nārada by Vālmīki as another Dharmarāja as far as truth was concerned.

There is no better tapas, austerity, than satya, truth, *nāsti satyāt param tapah*,¹³ says Cāṇakya. It is easy to preach but

extremely difficult to practise it. Even Yudhiṣṭhira who had earned the exalted title of Dharmarāja on account of his adherence to truth and righteousness faltered once in its practice by permitting himself the equivocal statement *Aśvatthāmā hato naro vā kuñjaro vā*, Aśvatthāman; it could be a man or an elephant; is killed, that had made his chariot touch the earth which had been otherwise five finger-lengths above it.

Truth is not only elusive but also superhuman while lying is not. Mahatma Gandhi who put in consistent efforts to tell the truth must have found it the most difficult of his missions. He escaped the dilemma by 'experimenting' with truth rather than propagating it or relying on it. Truth is a moral concept which has to be taught or imposed but lie is spontaneous. One may have a machine to detect lies, a lie detector, but not a machine to detect truth, a truth detector.

It is because of the extreme difficulty of keeping truth and lie away from each other that the old preceptors and teachers accommodate the role of lies in human life. They sanction in worldly affairs the use of truth paired with untruth: *satyānṛtaśabdau mithunīkṛtya naisargiko 'yam lokavyavahārah*.¹⁴

Śukra, the guru of King Bali warns the latter to be wary of Vāmana (Viṣṇu's fourth incarnation in the dwarf form) and advises him to hide himself and say that he is not available when he approaches him. The noble king who would not tell a lie, says 'no' to it prompting Guru Śukrācārya to say

*na narmayuktaṁ vacanaṁ hinasti
na strīṣu rājan na vivāhakāle
prāṇātyaye sarvadhanāpahāre
pañcānṛtāny āhur apātakāni*¹⁵

"(Untrue) words said in joke cause no harm, nor do they do so in affairs with women, in the performance of marriage, in times of danger to one's life and (at the possibility) of the loss of entire wealth. Five (types of) lies are said not to lead to sin."

In spite of all this the scriptures enjoin adherence to truth, that being the ideal. Truth is the second of the distinctive marks, *lakṣaṇas*, according to Manu of *dharma*: *ahiṁsā satyam*

asteyam.....daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam.¹⁶ Aśoka also includes it among the *lakṣaṇas* of *dharma* in his Delhi Topra Pillar Edict II in answer to his poser: *kiyaṁ cu dhammeti*, what is *dhamma*? His answer is: *Dhamma* or *Dharma* is *bahukayāne dayā dāne sace socaye sādhave mādave, apāsnavaḥ bahukalyāṇam dayā dānam satyaṁ śaucam sādhitā mārḍavam*; compassion, charity, truth, purity, goodness and gentleness.

Indian tradition furnishes in its long history an instance of adherence to truth which has few parallels. The reference is here to King Harīścandra who passed all the severe tests the sage Viśvāmitra had put him to check whether he keeps to his word or not. The king had to forego his kingdom to sell off his wife and son and even his own self but did not allow himself to swerve from his plighted word. It is because of that he earned for himself the sobriquet of *satyavādīn*, *Satyavādī Harīścandra*.

Indian tradition assigns the most exalted position to *satya* in that it equates it with the most sacred of the texts, the Vedas which are imperishable: *satyam evākṣayā vedāḥ*.¹⁷ as also with Brahman. *satyam ekapadam brahma*. In one word *satya* is Brahman itself, says the *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹⁸ On realizing it, the seer proclaims: *idam aham anṛtā satyām upaimi*,¹⁹ here I go from untruth to truth. All the ephemeral existence is unreal; what is real or true is the ever-present, all-knowing, self-existent Supreme, the Highest Truth, *satyam param*, which transcends all illusion, *nirastakuhakam*, which we all worship, *dhīmahi*.²⁰ It is this truth which is universal. It was true in the past, it is true in the present and it will be true in the future, *woh sī bhī sach, woh hai bhī sach, woh hoī bhī sach*, as says Nanak. In the ultimate analysis truth and God are one and indivisible. Truth is God and God is truth.

Just as emperor Aśoka put forward the poser: what is *Dharma*, after emphasizing time and again its practice, in the same way many thinkers and intellectuals of old place before themselves the poser as to what *satya* or truth is. The *Kenopaniṣad* has sought to answer this by saying that non-deception, the non-distortion of speech, mind and body is *satya*: *satyam iti amāyitā, akauṭilyam vānmanahkayānām*.²¹ In simple words *amāyitā* means

straightforwardness, the absence of artificiality, which goes with all the three, the speech, the mind and the body. The artificiality in speech goes with the use of words in a way as to yield a meaning different from the one intended. It is not unoften that one listens to words capable of yielding more than one meaning. That is perceived as an art, which lies in giving a different interpretation to one's words or misinterpreting them by giving them a turn and twist. While actually having said something one may come clean in not having said that. This is what diplomacy is. Since speech is a means of expressing thoughts which have their origin in mind, the turn and the twist in speech are only a manifestation of the same in mind. The body will act as per the direction of the mind. If each one of the three, the speech, the mind and the body are *amāyins*, undistorted, what will come out of them will be nothing but *amāyitā*, non-distortion,.....or as-it-is-ness or *yāthārthya* or truth. -2

The *Prastāvatarīṅgīnī* refers to an old statement according to which *satya* is that phenomenon where speech, and mind say one and the same thing: *yathārthe vānmanase satyam*.²² It is our common experience that we very often do not speak out what is in our mind or speak out just the reverse of it. That speech of ours is not true. When a person presses the doorbell about the midnight when we are getting ready to go to bed or are already in it enjoying sound sleep, we curse the fellow who disturbed us. We open the door fretting and fuming but finding a close friend or an acquaintance of long standing, we wreath our face with a broad smile and don an appearance of extreme happiness in his affording us an opportunity to welcome him. This certainly is no *satya*. Our mind and speech are not at the same wavelength at this time. Whenever they would be so, it would be *satya*.

That we are not always true is the reason that we have started qualifying or quantifying truth. We very often use such expressions as 'it is very true, it is absolutely true, it is nothing but true.' Our expressions like 'it is not far from truth, it is simple truth, it is not totally devoid of truth; it is the whole truth,' etc. betray our dilemma in keeping truth away from untruth, a

dilemma which has plagued mankind since times immemorial.

According to the Līṅgapurāṇa the description of anything exactly in the same form in which it is seen, heard, inferred or experienced is satya, truth, provided it does not cause hurt to beings:

*dr̥ṣṭam śrutam cānumitam svānubhūtam yathārthataḥ |
kathanam satyam ity uktam prāṇipīḍāvivarjitam ||*²³

The expression prāṇipīḍāvivarjitam, bereft of hurt to beings in the context of truth, as quoted above, leads us to an aspect of truth which has received careful attention in Indian tradition. It does not accept mere factual statement as truth but only that statement which does not cause harm or injury to others. If an untruth could save an innocent life, it would be truth. The Padmapurāṇa says that the untruth that saves the life of people is truth and the truth that does not do so, is untruth.:

*uktvā 'nṛtaṁ bhaved yatra prāṇināṁ prāṇarakṣaṇam |
anṛtaṁ tatra satyam syāt satyam apy anṛtaṁ bhavet ||*²⁴

The same idea is echoed in the Yogasūtra²⁵ and the Lāṭasamhitā.

The question now is:

Should one persist with it still? Is one to tell a dacoit or a murderer the place of hiding of an innocent person so that he could rob or kill him? Will that be truth? It is at this point that the ancient thinkers paused and after going into every aspect of truth in all their thoroughness found no hesitation in declaring that there is no harm in resorting to untruth in such cases. A work like the Mahābhārata clears the air about the practical aspect of truth. In ringing words it declares that where truth is not to be spoken and the untruth needs to be spoken, untruth becomes truth and truth becomes untruth:

*bhavet satyam avaktavyam vaktavyam anṛtaṁ bhavet |
tatrānṛtaṁ bhavet satyam satyam cāpy anṛtaṁ bhavet ||*²⁶

While it is important to speak the truth, be correct about everything, it is equally important that truth should cause no harm to others:

*yad vidyamānārthaviṣayam prāṇipīḍākaraṇam tat satyam apy asatyam*²⁷।

More than one ancient Sanskrit text extols truth assigning it the highest place among the virtuous deeds. The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* enumerates such deeds in the ascending order of importance, closing the enumeration with *satya*. It proclaims it as the highest form of *dharma*: *nāsti satyāt paro dharmah*.²⁸ To build an oblong tank, *vāpī*, says it, is better than (digging) a hundred wells, a sacrifice is better than a hundred wells, a son is better than a sacrifice and truth is better than a sacrifice. In words more forceful than the above it proclaims at yet another place that one earns more merit by gifting an oblong tank, *vāpī*, than a hundred wells, still more merit by giving a girl in marriage than by gifting ten such tanks, still more merit by performing a sacrifice than by giving ten girls in marriage, still more merit by speaking truth than by performing a hundred sacrifices. The whole world stands on truth, says it; it being the basis of everything. It is with it that the wind blows and the sun shines. Everything depends upon it. It is supreme. One who is united with it turns into divinity.

Satya or truth has been accepted as the cardinal principle even for State Policy in India. It occupies the first place among the great qualities of a king: *satyam śauryam dayā tyāgo nr̥pasyaite mahāguṇāḥ*?²⁹ truth, valour, compassion and charity are the great qualities of a king without which he becomes an object of disparagement. ✓

If an alliance is to be forged, it should be with a truthful king.

Kālidāsa makes a very interesting remark in the context of the enumeration of the qualities of the kings of the Raghu race. For keeping to truth, they would exercise economy in words, *satyāya mitabhāṣiṇām*,³⁰ says he. This is indicative of the deep insight of the ancients into human psychology. Too many words have greater potential of straying away from truth. The boasts and the bombasts would render it difficult for a man to keep to the narrow path of truth. *Manu* rightly ordains that one should first put one's words in the sieve of truth and then speak: *satyapūtām vaded vācam*.³¹

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23. *Līṅgapurāṇa*, 8.13
24. *Padmapurāṇa*, 5.15.392
25. 1.21
26. *Mahābhārata*, Karṇaparvan, 69.32
27. *Cāritrasāraṅgikā*, 2.
28. *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, Janmakhaṇḍa, Adhyāya 95 (Ref. from *Śabdakalpadruma*)
29. *Hitopadeśa*, 3.31.
30. *Raghuvamśa*, 1.7
- ✓ # 31. *Manusmṛti*, 6.46.

Dharma

At the time of completion of education a student was given parting instruction by his teacher where he was asked to follow *dharmā*, *dharmam cara*¹ and never to neglect it, *dharmān na pramaditavyam*².

Dharma has received utmost attention and fulsome praise in India from sages and seers, thinkers and philosophers, writers and critics. If protected, it protects; if killed, it kills: *dharmā eva hato hanti dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ*³.

Etymologically *dharmā* means that which sustains, *dhāraṇād dharmā ity āhuḥ*, *dharmā* is what holds people together, *dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*⁴. *Dharma* is made up of two components √*dhṛ* 'to sustain' and the suffix *man*, the active agent, the one, which sustains. It is a set of rules, conventions and customs, which lay down norms for individual and social conduct and behaviour and which are sanctified by tradition. They form the bedrock of social order. Without these the society turning into a medley of unruly individuals would just disintegrate. Man not observing them would do anything but revert to his original status of animal, *dharmeṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*⁵.

Efforts were on since the early past to define this rather elusive term. *Manu*, the earliest law-giver has recorded its ten characteristics which are contentment, forgiveness, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, (obedience to the rules of) purification, coercion of the organs, wisdom, knowledge of the (supreme soul), truthfulness and abstention from anger:

*dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo śteyaṁ śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam*¹⁶

The Hitopadeśa reduces the list to eight:

*ijyādhyayanadānāni tapaḥ satyam dhṛtiḥ kṣamā
alobha iti mārgo 'yam dharmasyāṣṭavidhaḥ smṛtaḥ*¹⁷

Sacrifice, study (of the scriptures), charity, penance, truth, fortitude, forgiveness and absence of greed is the eightfold path of dharma.

The Bhāgavatapurāṇa reduces the number by one; it records seven characteristics of dharma:

*ahiṁsā satyam asteyam akāmakrodhalobhatā
bhūtapriyahitehā ca dharmo 'yam sārva-varṇikaḥ*¹⁸

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, absence of passion, anger and greed and the desire to do what is good or agreeable to beings is dharma for all the castes.

The figure of seven is reduced to five from his list of ten by Manu. These five characteristics are "abstention from injuring (creatures), truthfulness, abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity and control of the organs":

*ahiṁsā satyam asteyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
etaṁ sāmāsikam dharmam cāturvarṇye 'bravīn Manuḥ*¹⁹

Bringing down the number four from five he says that the Veda, the sacred tradition, the customs of the virtuous men and what is dear to one's own self constitute dharma:

*vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ
etac caturvidham prāhuḥ sāṅśād dharmasya lakṣaṇam*¹⁰

The Mahābhārata picking up the common denominator of all these declares only one to be the distinguishing feature of it which it describes as its essence, dharmasarvasva which is that one should not do to others that which one would not like to encounter oneself: *ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācāret*. It also explains it as just anṛśamya¹¹, compassion which it calls the best of the virtues, pāro dharmah or ārjava, straightforwardness, ārjavaṁ dharmam ity āhuḥ¹².

The approach for succinctness in defining dharma seems to have gained in appeal which is in evidence in Kaṇāda's explanation of it as *yato 'bhyudayaniḥṣreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmah*¹³, that which leads to rise (material prosperity) and final beatitude is *dharma* and that of Jaimini *codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah*, scriptural injunction is *dharma* rise

Emperor Aśoka defines *dharma*, he calls it *dhamma*, the Pali form of it, as compassion, charity, truthfulness, purity, goodness, gentleness; *dayā, dāne, sace, socave, mādave, sādhave*¹⁴. This is in essentials the same as enunciated by Manu. *Dharma*, therefore, signifies, according to Manu and Aśoka, a set of ethical principles termed rightly as the common property of all religions.

A word capable of many shades of meaning, *dharma* also signifies rule or practice. When it is said *kṛte ca pratikurvīta eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*¹⁵, one should return the good deed done, it precisely has the same meaning; *eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ* means 'it is the age-old rule'.

Very often the term signifies duty. Manu states the *dharma*s, duties, in *Kṛtayuga* are different from those in *Tretā*. The same is the case with *Dvāpara* and *Kali*. When the *Bhagavadgītā* says *svadharmaṁ nidhanam śreyah paradharmaṁ bhayāvahaḥ*¹⁶, it is better to lose one's life while doing one's duty going with one's station in life than to take on the duty prescribed for a different station, it has that very meaning. Kālidāsa too uses the word in that very meaning when he says *ṣaṣṭhamśavṛtter api dharma eṣaḥ*¹⁷, it is the duty of one who draws one sixth of the income of the subjects as the State revenue.

As one of the four ends of life, the *caturvarga*, it means righteousness, good deeds. It is this, which is said to be the only friend who follows a person even in death: *eka eva suhrd dharmo nidhane 'py anuyāti yaḥ*¹⁸.

There could be occasions when duties may conflict with each other. One may have to choose between two duties and prioritize one over the other. To falter in such situations is not uncommon. Kālidāsa describes in the very beginning of his *Raghuvamśa* a situation which even a king of the calibre of *Dilipa* could not

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handle properly. Well, it is the duty, the sacred obligation, of a husband to satisfy his wife sexually after the period of menstruation. The king with his mind intent on this was in a hurry not to violate this obligation. This led to his not showing due respect to the divine cow Surabhi by not circumambulating her on the way back to the earth after having waited upon Indra, thus incurring her curse of not being blessed with progeny till such time as he were to propitiate her daughter. Now here was a situation where Dilipa had two duties, one towards his wife and the other towards the celestial cow. While it was dharma to be united with the wife, it was also dharma, sādhvācarana, to be respectful to the divine cow. Caught in this cleft stick he should have exercised his judgement. Showing respect to divine beings, devayoni, is more important than hurrying to meet the manuṣyayoni, even if that would have implied transgression of duty, dharmalopa, temporarily.

In the Mahābhārata a situation arose when Yudhiṣṭhira in the game of dice put on stake even his wife Draupadī and lost her after having lost himself first. Draupadī put the question pointedly to the charioteer Pratikāmin deputed to bring her to the Court as to whether a person who had staked himself and lost has the authority over another person to stake him/her. With Pratikāmin reporting back to the Court what Draupadī had told him and Yudhiṣṭhira keeping silent, Duryodhana felt that it would be better if she were to put this question to the Court in person herself. Even though in periods and in one garment to cover her shame, she accompanied Pratikāmin deputed again to bring her and stood in front of the father-in-law Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It was from there that she was dragged by Duṣṣāsana under the orders of Duryodhana to the Court where none of those present including Bhīṣma, Vidura, Droṇa, Kṛpa and the other dignitaries gave any answer. At that point of time rose Vikarna, one of the younger brothers of Duryodhana to defend Draupadī. The thrust of his argument was that since Draupadī belonged to all the Pāṇḍava brothers, just one among them had no authority to stake her. This met with rebuttal from Karna on the ground that since the other Pāṇḍavas

had been staked and had been lost, they had forfeited their right over Draupadī. Moreover, Yudhiṣṭhira had staked all his possessions, which included Draupadī. So the question as to whether he had the authority to stake her had become redundant. Even being dragged and insulted by Duṣṣāsana Draupadī repeated her question and wanted an answer for it. It is here that Bhīṣma came forward with the remark that the way of dharma was inscrutable, defying even the intelligence of great thinkers. He expressed his helplessness in answering the question effectively and directed her instead to Yudhiṣṭhira. The story goes on reinforcing the view that there could be situations when it could be difficult to interpret dharma.

Dharma also is taken to signify right conduct, the conduct that conforms to accepted social norms which could include giving way first to Brahmins, cows and kings, not sleeping during the twilights and studying during them, thou-theeing the elders or addressing them by their name¹⁹. It also implies observing proper etiquette. It is this which makes old texts enjoin not scratching the head with joined palms²⁰ or urinating in the direction of the sun and the fire²¹ (they being taken as divinities) and urinating away from a habitation and throwing water with the feet's washings away from it²² and sleeping with the head in the northern and the western directions²³. The etiquette also includes not speaking when not asked²⁴.

It has been emphasized time and again that dharma is to be followed as a course of life with no mundane motive. One who tries to milk it or is assailed with doubt about it on having followed it does not get its fruit:

*na dharmaphalam āpnoti yo dharmam dogdhum icchatī
yaś cainam śaṅkate kṛtvā nāstikyāt pāpacetanaḥ*²⁵

Declares the Mahābhārata: dharma should not be doubted if it has not yielded the (desired result): *na phalābhāvād dharmah śaṅkitavyaḥ*²⁶. Phala is not for what it is resorted to. Those who remain steadfast in it meet with no misfortune. Even if they were to be striving to realize a particular aim, they should begin first with dharma for the realization of the aim, the aim is concomitant

to it as is the nectar to the heaven²⁷. What is important is that one should keep on doing good deeds. These by themselves would lead to the realization of the desired goal. There should be no reason to doubt the efficacy of *dharma*.

In the course of the discussion about *dharma* a point that needs special attention is that a *dharma* which comes in the way of another *dharma* is no *dharma*, it is a bad path, that which does not step on the other *dharma* is (real) *dharma*:

*dharmaṁ yo bādhate dharmo na sa dharmah kuvartma tatī
avirodhāt tu yo dharmah sa dharmah satyavikramāḥ*²⁸

The sage Lomaśa in the course of his conversation with Yudhiṣṭhira narrates the episode of King Śibi of Uśīnara to whom a pigeon, in reality Agni in disguise, repaired for rescue from an eagle, in reality Indra in disguise, chasing it, the divinities out to test the devotion of the king to *dharma*. When the king even though pressed hard by the eagle did not let go the pigeon on the score that it was his duty, *dharma*, to offer protection to a being who had taken refuge with him, the eagle makes the point that to keep a being, meaning itself, without food, the food that nature has earmarked for it, would be *adharma*. Were that, the *śaraṇāgatarakṣaṇa*, protecting the one come for rescue to be treated as *dharma*, then it would be that kind of *dharma* which would come in the way of the other *dharma*, the *dharma* of not keeping a being tormented by hunger away from its food²⁹.

It is situations such as the above that make *dharma* almost intractable. Rightly has it been said that it is as difficult to divine *dharma* as is to divine the feet of a serpent: *aher iva hi dharmasya padam duḥkham gaveṣitum*³⁰. It is this which has prompted thinkers to proclaim that even truth which is designated as the highest form of *dharma* and the deviation from which as impermissible that "that is truth that leads to the well-being of others, all else is technical truth", *na satyam kevalam satyam anṛtam na tathānṛtam, hitam yat sarvalokasya tadṛtam śeṣam anyathā*.³¹

"Truth is no truth in itself. Nor is untruth so. Whatever is good for all is truth. The rest is otherwise."

Dharma cannot be understood by reading about it alone; *na dharmah paripāṭhena śakyo bhārata veditum*³². It has to be put into practice. It is this, which sustains society, *dhāraṇād dharma ity āhur dharmo dhārayate prajāh*. Those who are not motivated for it are like shrivelled ones among grains and the white ants among the winged ones:

*pulākā iva dhānyeṣu putrikā iva pakṣiṣu
tadvidhās te manuṣyānām yeṣām dharmo na kāraṇam*³³

One needs to have no companion in *dharma*. Alone one may go with it: *eka eva cared dharmam, nāsti dharme sahāyatā*³⁴. So long is one's life, one should go on following *dharma*.

Dharma is broadly of two types, the *pravṛttilakṣaṇa* and the *nivṛttilakṣaṇa*³⁵, the do's and the don'ts, something which one should do and something which one should not. Among them again roles may change, the circumstances warranting their reversal. What is *adharma* may don the mantle of *dharma* in certain situations and at certain times. Even theft, lie and violence, which are condemned otherwise, could be resorted to as *dharma*, an act of piety, in certain situations like when one's life or the life of innocent persons is in danger. It is situations like these which lend legitimacy to the sages like *Viśvāmitra* eating dog's meat or messiahs of non-violence like *Mahatma Gandhi* resorting to mercy killing of a cow to enable it to escape mortal pain or *Yudhiṣṭhira* telling *Droṇa* who was blasting his army that *Aśvatthāman* had died. This type of *dharma* which in normal circumstances would have been *adharma* inviting strong censure, the author of the *Mahābhārata* terms as *āvasthika*:

*ādānam anṛtaṁ himsā dharmo hy āvasthikah smṛtaḥ*³⁶

the term being explained by the commentator *Nilakaṇṭha* as *avasthāviśeṣe bhavaḥ*, peculiar to a situation, *prāṇatyāgādau adharmasyāpi steyāder dharmatvāt*, when there is risk to life even a condemnable act, *adharma*, like theft and so on being *dharma*.

Further, *dharma* can be divided into duties or meritorious acts needed to be practised by all right-thinking people and the duties and activities peculiar to certain families, the *kuladharmas*, the

family traditions which would put a spanner in the acts of those who may go astray. They exercise a great hold on the family, the clan, the tribe and the community whatever the differences among their members³⁷ and ensure strict adherence to certain time-honoured norms. Interestingly, it is this community living in Bali in Indonesia that came effectively in the way of the spread of Islam when it was sweeping the other islands of the archipelago. An odd man or two in it could not dare conversion, however inclined for it, for fear of excommunication from the community, rendering his/her life pretty hard.

The scriptures lay down emphatically that a person must go on following *dharma* in whatever station of life even when in dire straits. He has to be even in his dealings with all. For this outer symbols (like ochre robes or matted hair) do not matter:

*duḥkhito 'pi cared dharmam yatra kutrāśrame rataḥ |
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu na liṅgam dharmakāraṇam ||*³⁸

Dharma yields what one may not have even thought of, *asaṅkalpyam acintyaṇ ca phalam dharmād avāpyate*. It is *dharma*, which affords protection in all situations. *Kauśalyā* invokes this very *dharma* when she bids adieu to her son *Rāma* leaving for exile for fourteen years:

*yaṁ pālayasi dharmam tvam prītyā ca niyamena ca |
sa vai rāghavaśārdūla dharmas tvām abhirakṣatu ||*³⁹

“O ye the tiger among the descendants of the race of *Raghu*, may that *dharma* which thou had been following joyfully and regularly, protect thee.”

REFERENCES

1. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 1.11.
2. *ibid*.
3. *Manusmṛti*, 8.15.
4. *Mbh.(Mahābhārata)*, Karṇa. 69.58. Also see *Rāmāyaṇa: dhāraṇād dharmam ity āhur dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ*, Uttara, 59. 7-8.
5. *Hitopadeśa*, Kathāmukha, 25.

6. *Manusmṛti*, 6.9
7. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.8.
8. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, 11.17.21
9. *Manu*, 10.63.
10. *ibid.*, 2.12.
11. *Mbh.*, Vana. 213.30.
12. *ibid.*, Anu. 142.30.
13. *Yogasūtra*, 4.100.
14. Delhi Topra Pillar Inscription No.7, line 12.
15. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 5.1.106.
16. 3.35.
17. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V.4.
18. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.66.
19. *Mbh.*, Śānti. 193.25.
20. *ibid.*, Anu. 104.69.
21. *ibid.*, 104.75.
22. *ibid.*, 104.82.
23. *ibid.*, Anu., 104.48.
24. *ibid.*, Śānti., 287.35.
25. *ibid.*, Vana., 31.6.
26. *ibid.*, 31.38.
27. *ibid.*, *nahi dharmād apaity arthah svargalokād ivāmṛtam*,
Udyoga., 37.48.
28. *ibid.*, 131.11.
29. *ibid.*, Chapter 131.
30. *ibid.*, Śānti., 132.20.
31. *Bhāratamañjarī*, Śānti., 402.
32. *Mbh.*, Śānti., 260.3.
33. *ibid.*, 181.7.
34. *ibid.*, 193.32.
35. *ibid.*, 241.6.
36. *ibid.*, 36.11.
37. *ibid.*, Vana., 243.2.
38. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.91.
39. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 2.25.3.

Dāna

There has been great emphasis on the quality of dāna, charity, in Sanskrit literature. The spirit behind this must have been the desire to share one's wealth and resources with the needy and the deprived, these (the wealth and the resources being meant by nature for everybody) of one's own free volition. There is no compulsion of any sort for parting with a portion of one's possessions and sharing it with others except the inner urge of making merit which may not always be free from the taint of self-interest in that the philanthropist or the donor while offering something by way of charity may have the idea that it will promote his well-being and that of his kith and kin.

Charity is defined as:

*parānugrahabuddhyā svavittaparityāgo dānam*¹; and *anugrahārtham svasyātisargo dānam*², parting of his possession by a person to help others.

The ancient thinkers of India have taken precaution to guard against the possibility of the act of charity leading to the growth of a feeling of superiority among donors over the supplicants, the less privileged ones, which may have the seeds in it of arrogance and which could well erode the good impact of the good deed. This point is made tellingly in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*³ in the address of the teacher to the pupil as he readies himself to go back home on completion of his education. The teacher says: *śraddhayā deyam, āśraddhā deyam, śriyā deyam, hriyā deyam, bhiyā deyam*, give respectfully, do not give disrespectfully, give in plenty, give in a spirit of humility, give with a feeling of fear.

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This again is the thinking behind the categorization of charity. According to the *Bhagavadgītā* it is of three types, Sāttvika, Rājasa and Tāmasa. The Sāttvika is one which is given as a matter of duty in proper time and place to a worthy person who has done no good turn:

*dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate 'nupakāriṇe|
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānam sāttvikam smṛtam||*⁴

The Rājasa is that which is given with the hope of return or reward or is given reluctantly:

*yat tu pratyupakārārtham phalam uddīśya vā punaḥ|
dīyate ca parikliṣtam tad rājasam iti smṛtam||*⁵

The Tāmasa is which is given at a wrong place and time or to an unworthy person without proper ceremony or with insult:

*adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate|
asatkṛtya avajñātam tat tāmasam udāhṛtam||*⁶

Apart from the above, there is another type of categorization of charity which has for its basis the different kinds of motivations. The *Skandapurāṇa*⁷ has six types of them: dharmadāna, arthadāna, kāmadāna, vrīḍādāna, harṣadāna and bhayadāna. The dharmadāna is that which is given routinely to the deserving ones, as a matter of duty, dharmabuddhyā, with no altruistic motive, anavekṣya prayojanam, arthadāna is to extract money out of greed from a wealthy person through allurements, kāmadāna is giving gifts to undeserving persons to serve a particular purpose, vrīḍādāna is giving charity to retrieve one's honour just to honour the promise of charity made in an assembly earlier, harṣadāna is giving gift/gifts as an expression of one's joy on hearing or seeing pleasant things, bhayadāna is to go in for charitable acts to ward off censure, danger or violence. At another place the same Purāṇa records another type of dāna, the kāmyadāna, the dāna given willingly, icchāsamstham, for begetting children, victory, prosperity, wife, son and so on.

The best of the charities is that which is given in all humility to a deserving person or to an institution with a feeling that it would do good to one's own self, the feeling of ātmanūgraha,

doing favour to one's own self, a point well-made in the Svapnavāsavadatta of Bhāsa where the Chamberlain announces the wish of the Magadha Princess Padmāvatī on a visit to the hermitage of the Queen Mother to offer gifts as a personal favour: *ātmānugraham icchatīha nṛpajā kasyādya kim dīyatām*⁸.

Ancient texts expressly prohibit the boast of charity: *na dattvā parikīrtayet* for it tends to diminish fame: *kīrtir hrasati kīrtanāt*.

Of all the gifts it is the gift of knowledge which is the best:

sarvebhyo 'pi hi dānebhyo brahmaḍānam viśiṣyate

And this gift has to be given with the least of the altruistic consideration. One who sells knowledge for eking out a living is a trader with his knowledge as the ware: *yasyāgamaḥ kevalajīvikāyai tam jñānapanyam vāñijam vadanti*. As per the Agnipurāṇa one who teaches the Veda and music and dance qualifies himself for heaven. Now the gift of knowledge may not be just in the form of teaching only, it could be in the form of presentation of a book too, the book that one has written:

*likhitvā pustakam dattvā bhuktimuktim avāpnuyāti
vedaśāstram nṛtyagītam yo 'dhyāpayati nākabhāk*⁹ ||

The presenter of a book gets enjoyment and heaven. It is not just that one should return favour, one should do so many times that over. The sun sucks water to return it thousand-fold: *sahasraguṇam utsraṣṭum ādatte hi rasam raviḥ*¹⁰. This is what Kālidāsa has said but much earlier, the Veda had preached that earn with hundred hands and distribute with thousand:

*śatahasta samāhara sahasrahasta saṅkira*¹¹ ||

Charity has to be spontaneous, so spontaneous that a donor may have to have just the feel of the need of a supplicant without his even expressing it: *tam dhig astu kalayann api vāñchām arthivāgavasaram sahate yaḥ*¹².

Faith in rebirth being ingrained in Indian psyche, it is believed that a supplicant of this birth, the one who begs, saying 'give me', 'give me', must have turned away the supplicants in earlier birth empty-handed saying 'I do not have', 'I do not have'. It is

this retribution of refusal to give that has brought upon them the misery of begging before others:

*akṣaradvyaṃ abhyastaṃ nāsti nāstīti yat purā
tad idam dehi dehīti viparītaṃ upasthitaṃ*¹³ ||

This should serve as warning to those who turn away the supplicants. It could well be that they themselves have to be supplicants in the next birth. This very consideration should lead them to the right track in not turning away the poor and the needy who approach them for help. To give in charity is not just a moral principle with the Indians, something which is good for society in relieving its misery, in bringing a cheer or two to the lowly and the miserable or just a principle for self-elevation, to raise oneself to higher levels of thought and conduct resulting in spiritual upliftment bringing in its train joy and bliss but also a principle of reaping what one has sown from which there is no escape. It is for this consideration alone, if not for any other, that one should not turn away supplicants.

If one has made a promise to give, one should fulfil it, no matter at what cost. There is no question of his going back on it, for, that would invite dire consequences. Declares the Agniṣpurāṇa: He who having promised to deities, teachers and parents does not give, has his hundred generations annihilated:

*kulānāṃ tu śataṃ hanyād aprayacchan pratiśrutam
devānāṃ ca gurūnāṃ ca mātāpitros tathaiva ca*¹⁴

To give charity is no good in itself unless it were to go to the deserving one, the *pātra*, a point emphasized time and again in ancient texts: *pātrāpratigatā vidyā pātrapratigatam dhanam*, knowledge to the deserving one and the money also to the same. Charity given to the undeserving one yields unwelcome result: *kupātreṣu tathā dattam dānam kuphaladam bhavet*¹⁵.

Philanthropy is a virtue that goes with people who give away in charity to supplicants not only money but even the wife and the son keeping back nothing for themselves: *yācakebhyo dadāty artham bhāryāṃ putrādikaṃ tv api na saṅgrhṇāti ca yat kiñcid dānaśīlaḥ sa ucyate*¹⁶.

Indian tradition furnishes a number of instances of such philanthropists. Dadhīci, Bali, Karṇa and many others like them who have passed into legends for this quality of theirs. Remembered by countless millions over the centuries they have turned into proverbial figures. Knowing full well and also reminded as in the case of Karṇa by his father, the sun, that he would be duped by Indra in the guise of a supplicant he does not hesitate to part with his armour and the ear-rings which were integral to his body. The removal of these entailed for him the virtual peeling off of his skin, a case of supreme sacrifice just to uphold his vow of not turning away a supplicant. The sacrifice was all the more poignant in that it made him in the absence of the natural shield vulnerable to the attack of the enemy which he could have warded off had he refused to part with what had been asked for from him. It was this spirit of not refusing a beggar that made these great people objects of perfidy. Had it not been so, Bali would not have been duped by Viṣṇu in the guise of a dwarf who asked to provide him only his three-feet-size of space. It is the acceptance of this request that landed the unsuspecting demon to the spectacle of the supplicant extending the size of each of his three steps to cover the entire heaven, the mid-region and the earth and pushing him (the philanthropist) to the nether world. The celebrated sage Dadhīci offered his bones to gods to enable their architect to fashion a thunderbolt with which Indra defeated Vṛtra and other demons. The sound of 'give' would never cease in the palace of Dilīpa (three types of sounds never stopped reverberating in his palace, the sound of the *mantras*, the twang of the bows and the sound of 'be given': *trayo ghoṣā na jīryanti dilīpasya niveśane mantraghoṣo dhanurghoṣo dīyatām iti vai trayah*).

There is a record in ritual texts of a sacrifice called Viśvajit wherein a king would part with all his possessions acquired by him in the course of the world conquest, the digvijaya, reducing himself in the process to utmost penury. Kālidāsa records in his Raghuvamśa¹⁷ the performance of this sacrifice by King Raghu after he had carried out the conquest of the quarters. Just when

he had donated everything approached him a young graduand Kautsa to ask from him the high amount of fourteen crores that he had to pay his teacher by way of fee, the dakṣiṇā. The king with nothing left with him and still not willing to turn away the supplicant approaching him for the noble purpose of paying the dakṣiṇā to the teacher resolved to procure the requisite amount from Kubera, the god of wealth, by launching an invasion on him the following morning, the invasion which was not to take place, gold having rained in the treasury the night before. Kālidāsa also records the rare spectacle of the king insisting upon the entire haul of gold being gifted away to the graduand and the graduand agreeing to accept only the stipulated amount but relenting when told that the extra amount could help the upkeep of the Āśrama, the hermitage of his teacher.

With wealth there are three possibilities: one, it can be given in charity, two, it can be used in enjoyments and three, it can go waste. One who does not give, nor uses it up has it wasted away:

*dānam bhogo nāśas tisro gatayo bhavanti vittasya
yo na dadāti na bhunkte tasya tṛtīyā gatiḥ bhavati¹⁸*

Dāna, charity, has precedence, as seen from the above, over the other use of wealth, the self-use.

There is an age-old tradition in India of educational institutions being supported by private donations. The State had hardly to do anything with them. The Gurukulas, the Pāṭhaśālās, the Catuspāṭhis and the Tols thrived on charity, as do some of them even now. This was and still is also the case with the Āśramas. It was considered, as is considered even now, though on a much reduced scale, an act of piety to build rest houses, the Dharmaśālās for visitors, to provide free meals to the hungry, to set up kiosks for water for the thirsty and to give alms to the poor and the needy. The idea of making merit provided the necessary motivation to the rich and the affluent to take to these charitable activities.

In ancient India as early as the time of the Upaniṣads the sages felt the need of raising ample stocks of food, *annam bahu kurvīta, tad vratam*, says the Taittirīyopaniṣad (3.9). The same Upaniṣad

goes on to say that there should be no refusal of food to anybody. Whoever comes to the house has got to be served sufficient food. This is a vow to be observed: *na kañcana vasatau pratyācakṣīta, tad vratam* (3.10).

A *mantra* of the *Rgveda* holds a person not willing to give food to others, gaining the same for no purpose. In truth it is his slaughter. He neither satisfies the deity, nor the friend. One who eats alone, eats sin alone:

*mogham annam vindate apracetā
satyaṁ bravīmi vadha it sa tasyai
nāryamaṇaṁ puṣyati no sakhāyaṁ
kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī*¹⁹

Not only this *mantra*, the entire hymn comprising nine *mantras* presents a picture of charity instructing the people as it does to share their food with others who have no food or have insufficient quantity of it. Says the *mantra* 10.117.1: "Hunger is death and one who eats but gives food to none moves quickly towards death. One who gives food is saved from extinction and a person not giving food hardly finds anything or any one capable of giving him happiness." Another *mantra* in the same hymn decries the attitude of 'let others give'. "Remember", says it, "the two heads are not equally efficient in accomplishing a particular task, two cows do not yield the same amount of milk, the twins do not have the same valour and members of the same family are not equally charitable. So, if one has some food, one should give a share of it to others." Going on with the same theme, the hymn says, "one who does not give food to a person needing it or to a guest come to his house, does not find happiness. A person causing pain by his stiff attitude in not giving food to a supplicant and eats in his presence cannot be happy."

The food is not to be shared only with human beings, it has to be offered before one starts to partake of it even with birds, insects and animals. The tradition of taking out five morsels, the *pañcagrāsas*, from the food served for the purpose in orthodox Hindu households persists even today. This has as its background the thinking, as elaborated in the *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad* that the

food is meant for everybody, the Creator having created it for all: *idam evāśya tat sādharmaṇam annam yad idam adyate*²⁰. A piece with this thinking is the declaration of the *Gītā* that those who cook only for themselves, those sinners (just) eat sin: *bhuñjate te tv agham pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt*²¹. A human being is a part of the Cosmic Order. Whatever he has from this Order, he has to share with others.

Even though charity has won high praise from ancient thinkers, it has elicited from them certain riders too. These are threefold. One, the money should have been self-earned. Two, the charity should conform to one's capacity so that one may not have to repent later: *dānam sattvमितam dadyān na paścāttāpadūṣitam*²². Three, gifting of money should cause no torment or misery to one's own people and others:

*aparābādham akleṣam svayatnenārjitam dhanam |
svalpam vā vipulam vāpi deyam ity abhidhīyate ||
śakte 'parajane dātā svajane duḥkhaḥ |
madhvāpānāviśādaḥ sa dharmāṇām pratirūpakaḥ*²³

"He who gives to others who are self-sufficient while his own people are living a miserable life, is a mere replica of *dharma*, a false *dharmātman*, the drinker of wine and swallower of poison".

The ancient texts have also taken care to emphasize that even if one is in a position to accept charity one should refrain from it: *pratigrahasamartho 'pi na prasajyet parigrahe*²⁴. Such a person earns for himself the prosperous worlds to which repair the philanthropists.

Charity, *dāna*, forms the cornerstone of the thinking of India. It is a duty, *dānam dharmah*²⁵, which one has to perform. Without it there is no good name, *na dānena vinā yaśaḥ*²⁶. It has to be given willingly, with a smiling face, *smiteṇa* and with dignity, *satkārapūrvam*²⁷. No condemnation is enough of one who does not give. He is a far weightier burden on the earth than the trees, the mountains and the oceans, *tena bhūmir atibhāravatīyam, na drumair, na giribhir na samudraiḥ*²⁸. Nothing can more tellingly express the feeling of revulsion for him than the trisyllabic word *arāti*, enemy, which etymologically means 'one who does not

give', *nāsti rātir dānam yasya*. The Indian society looked upon such a person as its enemy !

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13. Skandapurāṇa, Ma.Kau. 2.65.
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15. Padmapurāṇa, 3.71.
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17. Fifth Canto.
18. Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha, 161.
19. Rgveda, 10.117.6.
20. 1.5.2.
21. 3.13.
22. Cārucaryā, 18.
23. Skandapurāṇa, Ma. Kau. 4.67. Also for similar idea see Yājñavalkyasmṛti, 1.10.213.
24. Yājñavalkyasmṛti, 1.10.213.
25. Cānakyaśūtra, 135.
26. Sabhārañjanaśataka, 42
27. Nītidviṣaṣṭikā, 28.
28. Naiṣadhiyacarita, 5.88.

Ācāra or Sadācāra

Indian tradition has laid great emphasis on ācāra or sadācāra, good conduct, so much so that it has been proclaimed as the highest virtue: ācāraḥ paramo dharmah.¹ One not observing it even the Vedas, the purest of the pure, cannot redeem: ācārahīnam na punanti vedāḥ.²

The śāstras proclaim the supremacy of ācāra which comprises practising a set of rules sanctified by tradition and codified in the texts. These rules are meant to regulate individual conduct for improving the quality of human life by making him fall in line with the order devised to uphold smooth and normal functioning of society. The goodness in the conduct of the individual is relative to his usefulness in social well-being. By following ācāra, the time-tested long-evolved code, one leads a more peaceful life. It is ācāra, which exercises control on him, and this springs from within. One who follows it is according to the Devībhāgavata-purāṇa always pure, always happy:

*ācāravān sadā pūtaḥ ācāravān sadā sukhī*³

As per the Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa, a person, even though possessed of (good) marks, does not imbibe knowledge, nor anything else he aspires, if he is devoid of ācāra. Such a man goes to hell:

*sarvalakṣaṇayukto 'pi naras tv ācāravarjitaḥ
na prāpnoti tathā vidyām na ca kīñcid abhīpsitam*⁴

A person of good conduct, ācāravān puruṣa, however, enjoys heaven, fame, long life, honour and all the worldly pleasures:

ācāraḥ svargajanana ācāraḥ kīrtivardhanaḥ |
ācāraś ca tathāyūṣyo dhanyo lokasukhāvahaḥ ||⁵
ācārayuktas tridivam prayāti
ācāravān eva bhavaty arogaḥ |
ācāravān eva ciraṁ tu jīved
ācāravān eva bhunakti lakṣmīm⁶ ||

Manu terms *ācāra* as the source of dharma: *ācāraprabhavo dharmah.*

All this fulsome praise of *ācāra* leads us to the question as to what this *ācāra* is. Its etymology is two-fold: *ācaryate anena* and *ācarati asmin*, 'one through which is conducted (life)' and 'in which one conducts oneself.'

Manu while emphasizing the importance of his work draws attention to the fact that it fully states the law as well as the immemorial (*śāśvata*) rule of conduct, *ācāraś caiva śāśvataḥ.*⁷ Kullūka, the Manu commentator explains *śāśvataḥ* as *pāramparyāgataḥ*, which has come down from generation to generation. Proceeding further Manu terming it as the transcendent law points to its framework; it is the one which is taught in the revealed texts in the sacred tradition, *śrutyuktaḥ smārta eva ca,*⁸ and enjoins that a man having regard for himself should always be careful to follow it, *tasmād asmin sadā yukto nityam syād ātmavān dvijah.*⁹

A Brāhmaṇa who departs from the rule of conduct, *ācāra*, does not reap the fruit of the Veda while he who follows it obtains its full reward. To use the *Mahābhārata* imagery the Vedic mantras leave the person devoid of *ācāra* at the time of death as do the birds the nest when they develop wings: *nīdam śakuntā iva jātapakṣāś chandāmsy enam prajahaty antakāle.*¹⁰

Sadācāra is what *ācāra* is though the *sat* part of it is explained differently. The compound in it is dissolved in three ways: *saṁś cāsau ācāraś ca sadācāraḥ*, the *ācāra*, the conduct as it exists; *sad=samyak ācāraḥ sadācāraḥ*, good conduct; *satām=sādhunām ācāra iti sadācāraḥ*, the conduct of the good people, the dissolution acceptable to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* as should be clear from the explanation of it that it furnishes: *sādhavaḥ*

kṣīṇadoṣās tu sac chabdaḥ sādhuṇvācakaḥ, teṣāṃ ācaraṇaṃ yat tu sadācāraḥ sa ucyate,¹¹ the *sādhus*, the good people are those who have no infirmities, the word *sat* conveys those very people, the *sādhus*, the conduct, the *ācāra*, of those people is what *sadācāra* is. According to *Manu sadācāra* is what is *śrutismṛtyudita*,¹² declared in the revealed texts and in sacred tradition, the same thing as he said in the case of *ācāra*, *śrutiyuktaḥ smārta eva ca*,¹³ only the words are slightly different here.

According to *Manu* the custom handed down in regular succession, *pāramparyākramāgataḥ*,¹⁴ among the four castes and the mixed races of the country called *Brahmāvarta*, the country made by gods and lying between the divine rivers *Sarasvatī* and *Drṣadvatī* is called *sadācāra*, the conduct of virtuous people, *sadācāra ucyate*.¹⁵

Ācārā or *sadacārā* can be of three types: *kāyika*, *vācika* and *mānasika*, physical, verbal and mental called by Jain Acaryas as *samyak jñāna*, *samyak dṛṣṭi* and *samyak cāritrya*. Physical cleanliness through bath, *snāna*, the observance of celibacy, *brahmacarya*, non-violence, *ahiṃsā*, doing good to others, *paropakāra*, worship of gods, *devapūjā*, etc. is physical *ācāra*. To speak truth, *satyabhāṣaṇa*, to speak gently without injuring the feelings of others, *priyabhāṣaṇa*, to read or recite holy texts, to sing the praise of God, *īśvarastavana* is verbal *sadācāra*. Gentleness, compassion, fortitude, steadfastness, forgiveness and keeping away from six types of weaknesses, *doṣas*, is mental *sadācāra*.

There is emphasis in old texts on the inculcation of *ācāra*. An *ācārya* is directed to teach his pupils *ācāra* along with imparting knowledge of different disciplines: *sadācārāṃś ca śikṣayet*. As a matter of fact, that is his primary duty, he being *ācārya*, *ācāryaḥ kasmāt, ācāraṃ grāhayati*,¹⁶ why is *ācārya* called so, because he teaches *ācāra*. Apart from his teaching of it, he also conveys it to his pupils through his personal conduct, which is expected to set the example to him. The parting advice of the *ācārya* at the end of the period of instruction to his pupil is *satyaṃ vada, dharmam cara, svādhyāyān mā pramadaḥ*,

mātrdevo bhava, pitrdevo bhava, ācāryadevo bhava, atithidevo bhava,¹⁷ speak truth, follow *dharma*, do not neglect the study of the *Veda*, look upon your mother as a deity, your father as a deity, your teacher as a deity, the guest as a deity. Lastly realizing that he being just human might have faltered in maintaining proper conduct himself, he cautions the pupil that he should follow all his good deeds and not others, *yāny asmākaṃ sucaṛitāni tāni tayopāśyāni no itarāṇi*.

The *Nīti* texts, every one of them, are full of instructions as to how one is to conduct oneself in life. So are the works on tales and fables like the *Pañcatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa* where each tale or fable carries a moral. The *Mahābhārata*, the veritable repertory of Indian wisdom, has enough of statements about the ideal human conduct individually and societally. So has the sister epic the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They provide guidelines about the acceptable norms of conduct which *ācāra* or *sadācāra* is. It needs no emphasis that most of these norms are universal in nature, not being limited to any particular region or period of time. Take, for instance, the norm of showing of respect to elders. A younger person would hold his breath high till he had left his seat and bowed to the elderly:

*ūrdhvaṃ prāṇā hy utkrāmanti yūnaḥ sthavira āyatiḥ
pratyutthānābhivādābhyāṃ punas tām pratipadyate*||¹⁸

It is in line with this feeling of respect for the elders that the *Mahābhārata* prohibits the use of Thou-Thee for the elders and addressing them by their name: *tvāṅkāraṃ nāmadheyam ca jyeṣṭhānām parivarjayet*.¹⁹

The *Upaniṣad* enjoins: Treat the guest as a deity, *atithidevo bhava*. Any guest coming to the house has to be shown proper courtesy. He is to be received with pleasant looks, cheerful heart and sweet words. One should get up, advance towards him and offer him a seat; that is the established practice:

*cakṣur dadyān mano dadyād vācam dadyāc ca sūṇṛtām
utthāya cāsanam dadyād eṣa dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ*||²⁰

The houses of the good are in no want of grass (seat made of

it, the mat), space (the place to sit), water (to wash feet and to drink) and sweet and pleasant words:

*tṛṇāni bhūmir udakam vāk caturthī ca sūnṛtāi
satām etāni geheṣu nocchidyante kadācanaiḥ*²¹

The honour for guests is so ingrained in Indian psyche that it is enjoined that even if an enemy were to visit somebody, due hospitality should be extended to him: *arāv apy ucitam kāryam ātithyam gṛham āgate*.²²

The *ācāra* demands that due consideration be shown to womenfolk. For this the one evidence is not Manu's oft-quoted injunction: *yatra nāryas tu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ*,²³ "where women are shown respect, the gods revel there". The evidence is found also in the etiquette prescribed in the *Mahābhārata* of giving them the right of the way. The same also holds good for the physically handicapped, the blind and the deaf and the carriers of load. The turn of the king, howsoever mighty he may be, comes after all the above with Brāhmaṇa, the intellectual, stealing the palm over all others:

*andhasya panthā badhirasya panthāḥ
striyaḥ panthā bhāravāhasya panthāḥ
rājñāḥ panthā brāhmaṇenāsametya
sametya tu brāhmaṇasyaiva panthāḥ*²⁴

The right of the way also extends to cows, a pregnant woman, an elderly person and a weakling. The right of the way, spoken of here, is symbolic of the consideration the society has to give to certain sections of it which are incapable of fending for themselves to deserve to be called a civil society. That is *ācāra*.

It is a part of good conduct that one should not speak unasked nor should one answer anybody's question if put with a bad intent: *nāpṛṣṭaḥ kasyacid brūyān na cānyāyena pṛcchataḥ*.²⁵ It is also imperative that one should be correct and forthright in one's speech in an assembly and not to keep mum or speak falsely which would mean courting sin:

*sabhām vā na praveṣṭavyam vaktavyam vā samañjasam
abruvan vibruvan vāpi nara bhavati kilbiṣṭi*²⁶

Since the toilets in the modern sense of the term did not exist in the ancient period, people would ease themselves out in the open as they do even now in the countryside in India. Proper hygiene and environmental purity desired the practice of certain norms in the matter of urination and defecation. The urination has to be at a distance from a habitation and also not in the direction of the sun, the fire, the cows, a Brahmin, nor has it to be on a thoroughfare, nor in water. One has not to urinate and defecate in water, nor spit in it, nor should take bath naked. The water after the feet have been washed in it and the left overs of the food have to be disposed of at a distance from the living place:

*dūrād āvasathān mūtram dūrāt pādāvasecanam |
ucchiṣṭotsarjanam caiva dūre kāryam hitaiṣṇā*²⁷

There is clear disapproval for sleeping, studying and eating during the twilight:

*sandhyāyām na svaped rājan vidyām na ca samācareṭi
na bhuñjīta ca medhāvī tathāyur vindate mahatī*²⁸

Bharata in the *Rāmāyaṇa* while embarking on vows to clear himself of the insinuation of being a party to the design of sending Rāma in exile makes a pointed reference to sleeping during the twilights. Says he: May I court that sin as would accrue to one who sleeps during the twilight.²⁹

It is never good manners to ridicule the physically handicapped; the blind, the lame and the deaf as also the miserable: *dīnāndhapaṅgubadhirā nopahāsyāḥ kadācana*.³⁰ This norm also extends to those who are destitute of knowledge, are weighed down with age, are ugly and poor as also of low birth:

*hīnāṅgān atiriktāṅgān vidyāhīnān vayodhikān |
rūpadravavyavihīnāṅś ca jātihīnāṅś ca nākṣiper*³¹

As a matter of fact, *ācāra* demands proper regard and consideration to the aged. In no case are they to be considered a burden on society. With experience behind them, they are an object of veneration. There are countless references in ancient texts where anyone deviating from established conduct is specifically charged in not having served the aged and the elderly.

In no case are they to be addressed by name nor in the tenor of Thou-Thee: *tvāṅkāraṁ nāmadheyam ca jyeṣṭhānām parivarjayet*.³²

The *ācāra* concerns itself with every department of human life, not leaving anything untouched. It goes to the extent of laying down does and don'ts with regard to such small things as chewing nails and clipping hair. It prohibits drinking water through joined palms, *jalam nāñjalīnā pibet*,³³ scratching the head with both hands at the same time, *na saṁhatābhyām pāṇibhyām kaṇḍūyet jātu vai śīraḥ*,³⁴ sitting with legs and feet wide open, *na kṣiptapādajaṅghāś ca prājñas tiṣṭhet kadācana*, putting one foot over the other, *pādaṁ pādena nākrāmet*,³⁵ spread the feet in the direction of the elders and the deities, *gurudevān prati tathā na ca pādaḥ prasārayet*.³⁶ There are norms for everything: In which direction is one to sleep, what one has to do after getting up in the morning, how one has to pass urine and defecate and in which direction and in which part of the day, how one has to take bath and where, how one has to eat and in which direction and which food and so on.

The Smṛtis like the *Manusmṛti* and the Purāṇas like the *Vāmana*,³⁷ the *Padma*,³⁸ the *Viṣṇu*³⁹ and the *Mārkaṇḍeya*⁴⁰ have full sections in them on *ācāra*. A brief synopsis of the same from one of them, the *Vāmana* is presented here to form an idea of the ancient Indian perception of *ācāra* or *sadācāra*:

Getting up in the morning a person should recite the *Suprabhāta sūkta*. After that he should go out to ease himself. In no case should he do so on the path where there are (idols) of deities or cows or Brāhmaṇas or on the highway or on a square or in a cow-pen. He should be facing the north if he were to pass urine or ease himself during the daytime or in the twilights and the south during the nights. He is not to pass urine on a road or on ashes or in a cow-pen or in a ploughed land or in water or on altar of bricks or a mountain or on the ruins of a temple or on an anthill or in holes inhabited by living creatures; nor has he to pass it standing or walking, nor on reaching the bank of a river. He is not to take bath naked and eat with one garment only. He is not

to associate himself with the wicked. He is to avoid food during twilights and sex during the daytime. He should not move about aimlessly, give charity and kill animals for no reason. He should keep away from the wealth and wives of others nor should he steal a glance at somebody else's wife if she is naked, nor should he exchange words with thieves. He should avoid the sight of a woman in menses, nor should he have contact with her, nor talk to her. He should not sleep naked nor should he look at his wife while she eats, sneezes or yawns or sits at ease, nor when she applies collerium to her eyes, has anointed or uncovered herself. He should not throw urine or faeces into water nor saliva (Compare the *Manusmṛti* injunction: *nāpsu mūtra puriṣaṁ vā ṣṭhivanaṁ vā samutsṛjet*)⁴¹ nor clothes defiled by impure substances, nor any other impure thing, nor blood, nor poisonous things. He should not look at the sun when it rises and sets, is eclipsed or is reflected in water or is in the middle of the sky. Were he to touch anything impure, he should have bath. So should he have it if he were to mix with people who had carried a dead body. He should not interrupt a cow who is suckling her calf, nor tell anybody of it. He should not eat anything from which oil has been extracted. He should not be a glutton. He should not eat very early in the morning, nor very late in the evening. He should not drink water out of his joined palms, nor eat food placed in lap or show (idle) curiosity. He should never wash his feet in a vessel of white brass. He should not eat out of a broken dish or out of which the appearance of which is defiled. He should not use shoes, garments, string, ornaments, garland and water vessel if used by others. He should not clip nails or hair. ✓

The list goes on and on. A civil man is expected to talk gently, help others, observe family traditions, show respect to elders and so conduct himself as not to court frowns of others. He is to invoke deities for their blessings. This is *ācāra*, the law sanctified by tradition and recorded in the *Śruti* and the *Smṛti* which people, the decent ones, follow and win fame thereby in this world: *śrutismṛtyuditāṁ dharmam anutiṣṭhan hi mānava iha kīrtim avāpnoti* ⁴² and which occupies the center stage in Indian life.

REFERENCES

1. *Vasiṣṭhasmṛti*, 6.3.
2. *Manusmṛti*, 1.108.
3. 2. 24. 98.
4. 3. 250. 4.
5. *ibid.* 271. 1.4.
6. *ibid.*
7. *Manusmṛti*, 1. 107.
8. *ibid.* 1. 108. i
9. *ibid.*
10. Udyogaparvan, 35. 42. The lines are found with a slight difference in the *Vasiṣṭhasmṛti*, 6.3: *chandāmsy enam mṛtyukāle tyajanti nīḍaṁ śakuntā iva jātapakṣāḥ*.
11. *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, III.11.3.
12. IV.155.
13. 1.108.
14. II.18.
15. II.17.
16. *Nirukta*, I.4.12.
17. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, Śikṣāvallī.
18. Anuśāsanaparvan, 104.64.
19. Śāntiparvan, 193.25.
20. Vanaparvan, 2.56.
21. *ibid.* 2.54.
22. Śāntiparvan, 186.5.
23. III.56.
24. Vanaparvan, 133.1.
25. Śāntiparvan, 28735.
26. *Manusmṛti*, VIII.13.
27. Anuśāsanaparvan, 104.82.
28. *ibid.*, 104.19.
29. Ayodhyakāṇḍa, 75.44
30. *Śukranīti*, III.15.
31. *Manusmṛti*, IV.141.
32. Śāntiparvan, 193.25.
33. *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, 34.113. The drinking of water, however, is permitted out of one hand, the right one: *dakṣiṇaṁ tu karaṁ kṛtvā gokarṇākṛtīvat punaḥ triḥ pibed īpsitaṁ toyam*, *Hārītasṁṛti*, 4.26.

- 34. *ibid.*, 34.44.
- 35. *ibid.*, 34.45.
- 36. 34.112
- 37. Chapter IV.
- 38. Svargakhaṇḍa, Chapters 29-31..
- 39. 3.11.
- 40. Chapter 34
- 41. *Manusmṛti*, 4.56.
- 43. *ibid.*, 2.9.

Karuṇā

While English has only three words, pity, mercy and compassion in the sense of helping others when in adverse circumstances, Sanskrit has double that number, *anukampā*, *anukrośa*, *anugraha*, *karuṇā*, *kṛpā* and *dayā*, which is a proof, if ever that were needed, of the importance the Indian tradition attaches to it. Generally these Sanskrit words are taken to be synonymous with each other but, as is the case with many other synonyms, may not really be so. Each one of these may represent a shade of the feeling which in its entirety may be difficult of expression. The most common of these words is *dayā* which *Tulasīdāsa*, the great saint-poet, has proclaimed as the source or the root of *dharma*:

*dayā dharma kā mūla hai pāpa mūla abhimāna
tulasī dayā na choṛiye job lag ghaṭa meṇ prāṇai*

“*Dayā*, compassion is the root of *dharma*, pride or arrogance is the root of sin. Says *Tulasī*, do not give up *dayā* so long as you have life in you.”

This *dayā* would be possible only if one has cultivated the spirit that all beings are equal. With that spirit one can identify oneself with others and own their sorrow and suffering. Just as a person would try to relieve himself of his troubles, his suffering, by putting up the requisite efforts, in the same way would he try to remove those of others. That is the *samadr̥ṣṭi*, the feeling of commonness which propels a person to do all he can, even to risk his life as in the case of rescuing a person drowning in a river or caught up in flames in a building on fire or to surrender all he

has, even his hard-earned savings, to render help to others so that they could be saved and their suffering mitigated. It is immaterial whether he knows the others or not. It is just the right impulse at the right moment. That is dayā. That is how it is defined in the Vāyupurāṇa:

*ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu yā hitāyāhitāya ca
samā pravartate dṛṣṭiḥ kṛtsnā hy eṣā dayā smṛtā¹॥*

“The entire outlook characterized by treating all beings alike whether the good ones or the bad ones is termed dayā.”

The Bhaviṣyapurāṇa defines it as

*apare bandhuvarge vā mitre dveṣṭari vā sadā
ātmavad vartanam yat syāt sā dayā parikīrtitā²॥*

“To treat a stranger or a relative, or friend or foe, as one’s own self is what is called dayā.”

Apte’s Sanskrit-English Dictionary reproduces a stanza; it does not give its source; which defines dayā as

*yatnād api parakleṣam hartum yā hṛdi jāyate
icchā bhūmisutaśreṣṭha sā dayā parikīrtitā॥*

“O Brahmin, the urge in mind that arises to put an end to some one else’s affliction, even at strain, is called dayā.”

Simply put all these definitions together point to dayā being an urge entailing conscious effort to remove or mitigate the suffering of others.

Dayā has, as it emerges from the above, a wider perspective including in its compass all beings, sarvabhūta, all creatures and not just a segment of them, say the human beings. Interestingly, it is only the word dayā which goes with the expression sarvabhūta and none of its so-called synonyms. One does not come across generally the words sarvabhūtakṛpā or sarvabhūtakaruṇā. The only expression that comes to one’s notice is sarvabhūtanukampā.

It is an exercise worth undertaking to divine the fine shade/s or nuances in the meaning of the Sanskrit words for pity and mercy or compassion listed above, not easy in the absence of the full details about their use in literature. But it is worth its while

even within the constraints of the paucity of information on that score which only a work like the Sanskrit Dictionary on Historical Principles currently under preparation in the Deccan College, Pune can provide.

We take up now the words for pity, mercy or compassion listed above in the alphabetical order. The first is anukampā. Pāṇini uses it in the sūtra anukampāyām³ which enjoins the suffix kan in the sense of anukampā which the commentary Bālaṃanoramā explains as dayā, the sense the commentary Tattvabodhinī also seems to imply by just quoting the Amara line kṛpādayānukampā syāt. But from the example putraka, it appears to yield the sense of endearment, putraka meaning dear son. This sense comes when the being is an object of loving or tender care. From this it is not difficult to slide into the sense 'to take pity,' e.g., katham brāhmaṇī mām anukampate,⁴ 'Oh! the Brahmin lady is taking pity on me.' or kim ujjiḥāṇajīvitaṃ mām anukampase,⁵ 'why are you taking pity on me who has lost (hope) of life.' The idea of pity is there but the usage points to that pity which a senior/superior/mightier extends to the junior/inferior/weaker. Even when the divine cow Nandini uses the word for herself: bhaktiyā gurau mayy anukampayā ca⁶ she seems to accord Dilipa, the king who is out to exchange himself for her, a higher position. The same is the shade in the expression bhūtānukampā tava cet when Dilipa makes the proposal for exchange.

Much less in use in literature than anugraha and kṛpā is the word anukrośa. Kālidāsa uses it in two of his works, the Abhijñānaśākuntala and the Meghadūta, in the former three times and in the latter once. Of the three times it occurs one is when Duṣyanta stricken with love finds fault with kāmadeva for having no consideration for him, bhagavan kāmadeva na te mayy anukrośaḥ,⁷ the second is when Priyamvadā entreats the fiery sage Durvāsa who had inflicted the curse on Śakuntalā that Duṣyanta in whose thoughts she was immersed would forget her (for the dereliction in not receiving him (the sage) with due courtesies): kim api punaḥ sānukrośaḥ kṛtaḥ⁸, 'was softened a bit'. Anukrośa Apte explains as 'disposed to show pity or sympathy'. He draws

attention to the similarity of derivation of the two words *anukrośa* and sympathy. *Anukrośa* comes from $\sqrt{\text{krus}}$ 'to cry' with *anu*, 'along with' while the latter is derived from 'sym', 'together' and pathos, 'suffering, feeling'. The third time the word occurs in the work is when Śakuntalā ascribes all her misfortunes to a deed (evil one, of course) of a past birth which made her otherwise compassionate husband hard-hearted towards her: *sānukrośo 'py āryaputro mayi virasaḥ samvṛtataḥ*.⁹ *Sānukrośa* the commentator Rāghavabhaṭṭa explains as *sakṛpa*, implying thereby that both mean the same, *kṛpā* here does not go in its usual meaning of pity or mercy. Normally sympathetic Duṣyanta turned unsympathetic towards Śakuntalā when brought to him by the Ṛṣis. In the *Meghadūta* the word occurs in the last stanza where the Yakṣa concludes the message which the cloud is to carry out of *anukrośa*, *mayy anukrośabuddhyā*,¹⁰ sympathy (Mallinātha's rendering of *anukrośa* is *dayā*) arising out of the feeling of friendliness or his being separated from his beloved, *sauhārdād vā vidhura iti vā*.

Anugraha is not pity or mercy but grace or favour. It goes with higher station in life or divinities. The uses in literature testify to this. Kālidāsa uses it at least four times in his works, the first two times in the *Raghuvamśa*, once in the *Kumārasambhava* and once in the *Abhijñānśākuntala*. The first time it occurs in the *Raghuvamśa* in the context of the lion overpowering the cow Nandinī introducing himself as the attendant of Siva of the name of Kumbhodara whose back is sanctified by the favour, *anugraha*, that the deity extends him by placing His feet on him at the time of mounting His bull: *kailāśagauram vṛṣam āruruḥṣoḥ pādārpaṇānugrahapātāpr-* u J
ṣam, avehi mām kiṅkaram aṣṭamūteh.¹¹ The second time it occurs in the context of the father of Śravaṇa inflicting a curse on Daśaratha for mistakenly killing his young son in that he too would meet his end through grief for his son which the latter (Daśaratha) takes as a favour for that would mean that he is going to have a son (till then he had no progeny): *śāpo 'py adṛṣṭatanayānanapadmaśobhe sānugraho bhagavatā mayi pātito*

'yam¹². In the *Kumārasambhava* it occurs in the context of Kāmadeva approaching Indra and enquiring from him as to why he has been shown the favour of being remembered: *anugrahaṁ saṁsmaraṇapravṛttam*.¹³ In the *Abhijñānśākuntala* it occurs in the context of the query of the king to the friends of Śakuntalā about her antecedents to which the friends' response is that his request is just a favour: *anugraha ivelyam abhyarthanā*.¹⁴ The form *anugrāhya*, to be favoured, is used by Bāṇa in his *Kādambarī*: *kathanenātmānam anugrāhyam icchāmi*¹⁵; *na vayam anugrāhyāḥ prāyo devatānām*.¹⁶

The word most used in Sanskrit literature after *dayā* is *kṛpā* which in sense is almost indistinguishable from the former. When the Lord notices that Arjuna is totally distraught on seeing his kith and kin ranged against him in battle he is filled with mercy, *kṛpayā parayāviṣṭaḥ*.¹⁷ Pārvatī is filled with mercy for the separated Cakravāka couple : *cakravākayoḥ puro viyukte mithune kṛpavātī*.¹⁸

The last of the words for mercy or compassion, *karuṇā*, has been defined as:

*dīneṣv ārteṣu bhūteṣu yācamāneṣu jīvitaṁ
pratikāraparā buddhiḥ kārūṇyam abhidhīyate*¹⁹

"The feeling of helping those who are in misery, pain and fear and are begging for life is what is called *kārūṇya* (*karuṇā*). Sarvārthasiddhi defines it as 'to show mercy to the miserable': *dīnānugrahabhāvaḥ kārūṇyam*.²⁰ The *karuṇā* resides in the Almighty, the All-powerful who is nothing but compassion (the Buddhists call it in their context *Mahākaruṇā*). Lord Rāma is said to be *karuṇāmaya*: *kākutsthaṁ karuṇāmayaṁ guṇanidhiṁ viprapriyam*. Death is cruel. So it is described *karuṇāvimukha*, averse to compassion: *karuṇāvimukhena mṛtyunā*,²¹ in Aja's lament at the loss of Indumatī. In the *Svapnavāsavadatta* of Bhāsa when *Vāsavadattā* is called upon to weave a garland for the would-be-co-wife *Padmavātī*, she feels bad and out comes the remark from her: *aho akaruṇāḥ khalv īśvarāḥ*,²² Oh! gods are unkind (merciless). In the *Meghadūta* the Yakṣa tells the cloud that the sorry state of affairs of his consort would make the latter

shed tears in the form of fresh water, for, says he, every one with tender heart (lit. wet heart) is of the nature of being compassionate: *prāyaḥ sarvo bhavati karuṇāvṛttir ādrāntarātmā*.²³ In the *Naiṣadha* the golden swan finding himself in the clutches of the king bemoans his lot, he being the support of his old mother and the young wife just delivered. How come, says he, O, (cruel) fate, kindness/compassion not hold you back (from oppressing him): *aho vidhe tvām karuṇā ruṇaddhi no*.²⁴

Kindness, sympathy, tender-heartedness, pity, mercy and compassion are values that go with humaneness. It would be a cruel world, if these were absent. They are elevating and ennobling. Like all qualities they are in-born in some and are to be cultivated through the study of the scriptures and the contact with the good people in others. There may still be some who may just not be moved by the miseries and cries for help of others. They have hearts of steel. It is they who permit themselves the most heinous of crimes. They are perverts, *ātatāyins* and *nṛśaṁsas* and deserve to be put to death without a second thought: *ātatāyinam āyāntam hanyād evāvicārayan*.²⁵ It is fortunate for society that they form only a small segment of it. Not to be *ātatāyin* or *nṛśaṁsa* is the supreme virtue, *ānṛśaṁsyaṁ paro dharmah*.²⁶

Sanskrit literature is full of statements where the qualities of sympathy, pity, mercy, compassion are extolled in superlative terms. It has cases where people, holy or ordinary, high and mighty and lowly and miserable have staked their all to provide succour to others. The classic cases are those of sage *Vālmiki* and the *Uśinara* King *Śibi*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* of the former is a saga of the melting of his heart at the pathetic sight of the female of the *Krauñca* couple crying piteously, *ruṛāva karuṇām giram*,²⁷ at the slaying of her companion when in love sport by a hunter. The ghastly scene of the male bird struggling on the earth bathed in blood so moved the sage, *ṛṣes tasya kāruṇyaṁ samapadyata*,²⁸ that he inflicted a curse on him never to have any respect: *mā niṣāda pratiṣṭam tvam agamah*.²⁹ It was his grief for the bird that had turned into *śloka*: *śokah ślokatvam āgatah*.³⁰

When the news of the public outcry about Rāma taking delight in the company of Sītā who had been forcibly carried in his lap by Rāvaṇa and lodged in the Aśokavanikā under the demon's guard which could also mean condoning similar things on the part of their womenfolk by the citizens reached Rāma's ears, he ordered her banishment to another country, the other side of the river Gaṅgā at a lonely place in the vicinity of the hermitage of the sage Vālmiki who when told by the sons of the Ṛṣis of their having spotted a beautiful lady crying loudly under the weight of her grief, went out to her, consoled her, brought her along and placed her in the care of the hermit ladies living in the periphery of his hermitage introducing her as the daughter-in-law of his friend Daśaratha and the daughter of Janaka who had been banished, though without sin, apāpā, and therefore deserving of special attention. It was in his Āśrama that Sītā delivered the twins. It was he who arranged for special protection, rakṣā, for them from ghosts and goblins, the elder one with the upper part of the grass, kuśa and the younger one with the lower part, lava; of the same duly sanctified by the mantras which he handed over to the elderly lady ascetics which they had to rub against the person of the infants who thenceforth derived their names from them (the upper and lower parts of the grass, kuśa and lava) (Rāmāyaṇa, Uttarakāṇḍa, 49.66). After he had composed his Rāmāyaṇa he taught the same to the twins when grown up a little. Its recitation by them he put to test in the company of the sages and seers in the forest who felt ecstatic and showered the young ones with all the meagre gifts they had with them. It is only after the efficacy of the recitation had been tested, he asked the young ones to proceed to Ayodhyā along with him where the Aśvamedha sacrifice arranged by Rāma was in progress and render the same in between the recess for the rituals to enable Rāma to listen to it in fulfilment of his ultimate objective of uniting Sītā with Rāma which he wanted to accomplish by twofold means of turning public opinion in favour of Sītā's acceptability; the total likeness of the physical appearance of the young ones with their father would be the proof positive of Sītā's purity and the other of Sītā

being alive and could be restored to her consort if everything went well, the objective in which he eminently succeeded, the objective which had propelled him to go all the way to *Ayodhyā*, even though uninvited, in spite of the fact—and this really is strange—that all high and the mighty of the sages of the time had received the invitation and were participating in the sacrifice and camp in the vicinity of the city under his own arrangements. On coming to know from the young reciters about the composer of the poem, *Rāma* invited him and requested him to bring *Sītā* along which he did to make *Sītā*, as per *Rāma*'s wish, pledge her purity in the assembly of the sages and the other important people. Presenting *Sītā* before *Rāma* and the congregation *Vālmiki* declares: "I have practised penance for thousands of years. May I not reap the fruit of it if *Sītā* is touched by sin":

α *bahuvṛśasasahasrāṇi tapaścaryā mayā kṛtāi
nopāśnīyām phalaṁ tasyā duṣṭeyam yadi Maithilī*³¹

This is the sage *Vālmiki* who stakes his *tapasyā* of thousands of years for the sake of a hapless lady. This is an instance of compassion unmatched in the annals of the world.

An equally unmatched incident as recorded in the *Mahābhārata*³² is that of King *Śibi* who to save the life of a pigeon taking refuge with him (for fear of a hawk chasing it) refused to part with it and offered his own self as food for the latter.*

*As goes the story *Indra* and *Agni* out to test the righteousness of King *Śibi* known for it took the form of a hawk and pigeon respectively, the latter going into the thigh of the king to save itself from the former who was chasing it. The king assured the pigeon protection and would not let it go inspite of the cogent pleadings of the hawk. The hawk would not accept any other creature as a substitute either. It relented only to the extent of accepting the flesh of the king equal in weight of the pigeon which the king sliced off from his body and put on the scale. The pigeon weighing heavier every time he did it, he with all the flesh sliced off climbed on to the scale himself winning thereby undying fame for his compassion in rescuing a creature come to him for refuge and an instant place in heaven.

A vast corpus of literature going by the name of Purāṇas furnishes a number of instances wherein the qualities of kindness and compassion are depicted. Since it is not possible to take up all those instances here for constraints of space, we shall have to confine ourselves to only a few, the more telling ones among them. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa*³³ records the story of the sage Aurva who saved the life of an unborn son of King Vāhu who could not be delivered because of a poisonous substance administered to his mother by a co-wife out of jealousy. The delivery postponed indefinitely, the king died seven years after it was due, his wife still carrying and not able to deliver, resolved to end her life, a resolve that she was made to give up by the sage. Not only that. The sage helped her deliver the child and brought it up under his care with the prescience that he would do good to society. The sage for his efforts was motivated solely by consideration of welfare of humanity. He had no personal axe to grind in all this.

The *Brahmapurāṇa*³⁴ recounts a very touching story of a pigeon couple of which one, the female one, was caught by a hunter. As chance would have it, the hunter came to spend the night under the same tree where the male of the couple was perching. In the night the female one responded to the chirping of her mate and declined the former's proposal to free her. She found no fault with the hunter for, according to her (the female pigeon) he was just following his profession. She even went a step further. She suggested to her mate that he take the hunter as guest and offer him food which he did by offering himself as food to him leaving him stunned and speechless.

The same Purāṇa in its 92nd Chapter recounts the story of a woman Mahī who getting widowed at a very young age went out to have an experience of the world leaving her young son in the care of the sage Gālava. In the course of her wanderings she turned into a prostitute. The son when coming of age also went out for the same purpose. As chance would have it, the mother and the son run into each other and for a while the son takes the mother as his mistress. When they come to know over a period of time the identity of each other, they want to end their life from

which they are prevented by compassionate Gālava who leads them to right path.

Of the nine virtues with which the Buddha is credited one is that of compassionate conduct: *itipi so bhagavā arcām sammāsambaddho vijjacaraṇasampanno sugato lakavidu anuttaro purisadammasarathi sattha devamanussānam buddho bhagaveti*, "the exalted one, the accomplished destroyer of defilements, a Buddha perfected by himself, complete in clear knowledge and compassionate conduct, supremely good in presence and destiny, the knower of the world, the incomparable master of men to be tamed, the teacher of celestials and men, the awakener and the Lord by skilful means apportioning Dhammas." As a matter of fact, it forms the cornerstone of the Buddhist ethos, Lord Buddha himself epitomizing it in his life which is clearly borne out by the following incident.

A certain Bhikkhu was once sick with dysentery and lay fouled in his own urine and excrement. As the Buddha was going the round of the lodgings with disciple Ānanda he came to that Bhikkhu's dwelling. When he saw him lying in the condition he was, he went up to him and said : "What is your sickness Bhikkhu?" It is dysentery, Blessed One, said he. "But Bhikkhu, have you no attendant?" "No, Blessed One." "Why other Bhikkhus do not look after you?" "I am no one to the Bhikkhus, Lord; that is why they do not look after me." Ānanda brought some water. Both poured it and washed the Bhikkhu, raised him up and put him on the bed.

With this as the occasion and this as the reason the Buddha summoned the Bhikkhus and asked them: "Bhikkhus, is there a Bhikkhu sick in a certain dwelling?" "There is, Blessed One." "What is that Bhikkhus's illness?" "He has dysentery, Lord." Has he anyone to look after him. If he has a preceptor, he (the preceptor) as long as he lives, look after him till his recovery. His teacher, if he has one, do likewise. Or his pupil or one who has the preceptor or one who has the same teacher. If he has none of these, the community should look after him. Not to do so is an offence of wrong doing, for compassion must be voluntary and eternal."

The following Dhamma talk is also very important to show the importance and role of compassion in Buddhism.

A certain youth who lived in Savatthi heard a teacher preach Dhamma. He yielded his heart to the Sanona, went forth to homelessness and after full admission to the Sangha became known as the Thera Tissa. As time wore on, an eruption broke out on his body. At first it appeared in the form of boils no bigger than mustard seeds but as the disease progressed they assumed successively the size of kidney, beans, chick-peas, jujube stones, emblyio myrobalans and then beael fruit. Finally they burst open and his whole body got covered with open sores winning him the nickname Thera Putigatta (rottenbodied) Tissa. After a time his bones began to disintegrate and no one was willing to take care of him. His under and upper robes which were stained with dry blood, looked like fibrous pancakes. His fellow residents, unable to care for him, cast him out and he lay on the ground without anyone to look after him. The Buddha took pity on him. He knew that Bhikkhu Tissa was ripe for Arhantship. He thought to himself: "That Bhikkhu has been abandoned by his associates; at the present time he has no other refuge than me." Accordingly he went to the hall where fire was kept. He washed the boils of the Bhikkhu, placed him on the brazier, waited in the fire room for the water to boil and when he knew that it was hot, went and took hold of the end of the bed where the Bhikkhu was lying. He caused a measure to be brought and sprinkled hot water. Then he went and taking his stand near Tissa, moistened his body with hot water and rubbed and bathed it and then changed the robes. With his heart full of compassion he took his stand at the pillow and said to the Bhikkhu: "Bhikkhu, consciousness will depart from you, your body will become of no use." At the conclusion of his teaching Thera Putigatta Tissa attained Arhantship and passed to Nibbāna. The Buddha himself performed his funeral rites over the body and taking the relics, caused a shrine to be erected.

The following address of Lord Buddha to the Bhikkhus tellingly underscores the importance that he attached to

compassion: "O, Bhikkhus, the secure, safe path leading to joy has been opened by me, the treacherous path blocked off. Bhikkhus, whatever may be done out of compassion by a teacher seeking the welfare of his disciples, that has been done by me out of compassion for you. So be compassionate and full of love."

The compassion of Lord Buddha extended just for the well-being of society has justly been termed Mahākaruṇā, 'The Great Compassion.' This is not peculiar to the Buddha alone. It characterizes the Supreme Entity in the entire Indian tradition. The Lord is Karuṇāvaruṇālaya, the ocean of Karuṇā or karuṇāvatāra. It is through His Karuṇā that he runs the entire show of the universe.

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Paropakāra, Titikṣā (Kṣamā), Udyoga (Udyama), Santoṣa, Śauca, Śīla

Indian tradition lays great emphasis on cultivating certain values like paropakāra, doing good to others, titikṣā, tolerance, kṣamā, forgiveness, dama, self-control, indriyanigrāha, control over the senses, dṛti or dhairya, fortitude, śauca, purity, mṛdubhāṣitā softness in speech etc. which could form ingredients of śīla, an umbrella for all the good qualities.

In the human existence the best situation is when one has not to live only for oneself, that being just an animal instinct. A human being has to outgrow himself to reach out to others, to be of any service to them, to help them, should they require it, to provide succour to them. That is as it should be. That will elevate him mentally and spiritually by opening him up to the wider world which he would then come to look upon as an extension of himself. That will impart to him the feeling that his begetting the birth is of some worth: *parahitasampādanam ca janmaphalaṃ*¹. This is the real goodness that comes to the fore among the noble people of their own volition, *santaḥ svayaṃ parahite vihitābhiyogāḥ*². That is the barometer of goodness. It is that which does not make good people insolent in prosperity: *anuddhatāḥ satpuruṣāḥ samṛddhibhiḥ*. To do good to others becomes the very part of their being: *svabhāva evaiṣa paropakāriṇām*³.

If a person is learned, his learning should be such as to be useful to others: *sā vaiduṣī phalaṃ yasyā na paropakṛteḥ param*⁴.

This is easily noticeable in the way of the scientific and technological discoveries. The medical researchers who toil day in and day out in inventing new drugs to fight diseases or to relieve distress or pain or make these bearable are not doing so just for themselves. They toil for the good of humanity at large. That is true of scientists as well who devote long hours in their laboratories to make life of the common people more comfortable and easy.

The prerequisite to doing good to others is to be good to oneself, to be a *satpuruṣa*. It is the *satpuruṣas* who engage themselves in doing good to others. It is about them that it is said that their prosperity is for the good of others. It is they who are compared with rivers which drink not their own waters or the trees which eat not their fruits or the clouds which partake not themselves the grains (though germinating them):

*pibanti nadyaḥ svayam eva nāmbhaḥ
khādanti na svādu phalāni vṛkṣāḥ
payodharāḥ sasyam adanti naiva
paropakārāya satām vibhūtayah⁵ ||*

One has therefore to cultivate the quality of goodness to do good to others which leads to merit that every sane person desires to acquire. The gist of the vast Purāṇic literature, comprising eighteen works, as declares an old stanza in the most unequivocal terms, is to do good to others and not to cause trouble to them: *paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapīḍanam*.

For doing good to others, *paropakāra*, a strong will is necessary. A chicken-hearted man would think of his own self first. To move out of oneself needs determination, a resolute will. It is possible that in the course of doing good to others one may court trouble to oneself, even risk one's own life and invite penury and misery to oneself. Still, if one persists in one's efforts, that betokens one's strong will. Maybe, while doing good or thinking of doing good one may have to dissuade the other person from following a course which may be harmful to him. For this one may have to invite his harsh words. One is however not to be deterred by them:

*dhīraḥ sadā racayate hi paropakāram
vākyam kaṭhoram api tasya dayādragarbham
nirvāntatoyanivahair jaladair viśṛṣṭā
varṣopalā dadhati śītalavārigarbham*⁶॥

“A strong-minded person always does good to others. Even his harsh words have in them an element of kindness. The hailstones showered by clouds after they have emptied themselves of their mass of water have in them cool water.”

Paropakāra is a high watermark of a cultured person. He will go out of his way to share his wealth with the poor and the needy and thus win for himself undying fame. Kālidāsa refers to this very fact when he says that the loss of digits by the moon which is sucked digit by digit by gods is more appealing than the gaining of them: *paryāyapīlasya surair himāmśoḥ kalākṣayaḥ ślāghyataro hi vṛddheḥ*⁷. The really good people never even speak of the good turn they do to others; lest it were to cause hurt to their self-esteem. They would prefer to keep themselves in the background and just do good. An interesting anecdote connected with the well-known savant Ishvara-chandra Vidyasagar bears reproduction here. He was in the habit of going for morning walk. One morning he noticed a person crying at his sad fate. Vidyasagar approached him and asked him as to what was wrong with him. The man brushed him aside with the remark that he better mind his own business and leave him alone. When the latter persisted, the man was more insolent. ‘Do you have means to help me’, said he. ‘Leave me to my fate’, said he. With Vidyasagar still persisting, he told him that he had mortgaged his house for the marriage of his daughter and with him unable to pay the mortgage amount his house would have to be auctioned as per the court orders. The next day the auctioneer came at the appointed hour and told him to his surprise that his house would no longer require auction, somebody having paid the mortgage amount for him already, leaving him to infer that it must have been the same person who had accosted him the previous morning and with him he had been so harsh.

This is paropakāra in the true sense of the term.

The other human value which goes well with *paropakāra* is *titikṣā*, forbearance, endurance. It could be defined as withstanding the bad turn or harm done to one by another person. This requires a strong moral fibre. Normally the tendency is to pay back in the same coin. Not to do so is the highest virtue. It is this which can bring about many a gain that otherwise would be impossible. No means would equal it to achieve them: *na titikṣāsamam asti sādhanam*. If a person strong enough otherwise to retaliate or to inflict punishment were not to go in for it, he would earn the goodwill of the opponent and win him over. Rightly has it been said: *titikṣākavacenaikaḥ sarvaṁ jayati samvṛtaḥ*⁸, "protected by the armour of endurance one conquers everything". By everything what is meant is not just the hostility of the other party but also his own unease born of the desire for revenge and the agony caused by the opponent. It is a measure of one who is in a position to repay the insults, the abuses and the mental and physical injury. An instance here would bear it out. Once the wife of the well-known Maharashtrian saint Tukaram got angry with him and hit him with a sugar cane. The saint picked up the cane, broke it into two, gave one part of it to his wife and began to chew the other part himself much to the shame of the former who felt utmost remorse for her thoughtless action. Mahatma Gandhi, even though fighting the British rule never even for a moment bore ill-will for the British people. *Titikṣā* or endurance is a quality which leads in tandem with qualities like *śama*, tranquillity, *dama*, self-control, *uparati*, withdrawal, etc. to the realization of the self: *tasmād evamiv chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samaratir bhūtvā' tmany evātmānam paśyati*.

Kṣamā is another name for *titikṣā*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* proclaims it to be (the greatest of the) gifts. According to it it is the truth, it is sacrifice, it is a man's true glory, it is *dharma*, the whole world is sustained by it:

*kṣamā dānam kṣamā satyaṁ kṣamā yajñaś ca putrikāḥ
kṣamā yaśaḥ kṣamā dharmah kṣamayādhiṣṭitam jagat*⁹॥

Nothing, no curse, no exercise, no fire, no poison, missiles or weapons are sharper than *kṣamā*¹⁰.

He is said to be a real man who controls his rising anger with forbearance like a snake a worn out slough¹¹.

The real knowledge consists in *kṣamā*. It is the ignorant, the unwise who would fall a prey to intolerance which is the source of all troubles, all strifes and dissensions.

If only one were to give a chance to it, it would be a more pleasant world to live in. It is this which lends sheen to knowledge. It provides the healing touch to frayed tempers. The knowledge needs to be tempered with it. That will be its ornament:

*narasyābharāṇaṁ rūpaṁ rūpasyābharāṇaṁ guṇaḥ |
guṇasyābharāṇaṁ jñānaṁ jñānasyābharāṇaṁ kṣamā*¹² ||

“A handsome figure is the ornament of a man, the ornament of a handsome figure is quality, the ornament of a quality is knowledge and the ornament of knowledge is forbearance”.

Knowledge needs will power to back it up. Even when realizing that one should control one's emotions, one may not actually be able to do so. A determined effort is a *sine qua non* for this.

As a matter of fact, effort or initiative is a desideratum for all human activities. Man has been so designed by nature that he cannot sit idle even for a moment, not doing anything: *na hi kaścit kṣanam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt*. He is forced to indulge in some activity or the other compulsively as it were: *kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ*¹³.

This spontaneous/involuntary activity like eating, drinking, talking, walking, sleeping, is one thing and the conscious activity to engage productively in some thing or the other is another thing. It is this activity which is extolled throughout Sanskrit literature. *Udyoga, udyama or abhiyoga* as it is called there brings prosperity to a person who engages himself in it: *udyogināṁ puruṣasimham upaiti lakṣmīḥ*¹⁴. It is through this only that one achieves everything and not by mere pious wishes: *udyamena hi sidhyanti kāryāṇi na manorathaiḥ*. The deer do not gallop into the mouth

*araṇīmanthane jātu yo virantum na ceṣṭate |
sa eva labhate vahnim evaṁ siddher api sthitiḥ*¹⁹ ||

Persistence in an activity can bring success even to one who may otherwise be weak in constitution. As per an old *subhāṣita* even an ant, if on the move, though slow, covers thousands of *yojanas* (a measure of distance in old times) while a *garuḍa*, if sitting idle, does not move even a step forward:

*yojanānām sahasrāṇi yāti gacchan pipīlikā |
agacchan vainateyo 'pi padam ekam na gacchat*²⁰ ||

In no case is one to give up initiative, even if success were not to attend one's efforts. "That is my fate" kind of approach is no good or "whatever has to come has to come anyway", "what fate has ordained for one, that one has to bear" kind of thinking would get a person nowhere. Fate or no fate, one should continue with one's efforts. One can never get oil from sesame seeds without exertion:

*na daivam api sañcintya tyajed udyogam ātmanaḥ |
anudyogena tailāni tilebhyo nāptum arhati*²¹ ||

To a person who exerts repair all fortunes impulsively as do frogs to a pond and birds to a full lake:

*nipānam iva maṇḍūkāḥ saraḥ pūrṇam ivāṇḍajāḥ |
sodyogaṁ naram āyānti vivaśāḥ sarvasampadaḥ*²² ||

So a person should take to exertion like a friend and negligence as an enemy for it leads to great achievement:

*udyamo mitravad grāhyah pramādam śatruvat tyajet |
udyamena parā siddhiḥ*²³

Not only should one exert, one should exert quickly (without loss of time) in matters that one has to accomplish:

*kāryeṣv avaśyakāryeṣu siddhaye kṣiprakāritā*²⁴ |

Intimately connected with the quality of *paropakāra* is the quality of *audārya*, magnanimity, liberality which forms the bedrock to it. Without it one cannot really get ready to provide help to others. It is that which makes a person look upon the whole earth as one family, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*²⁵.

It is only when a person accepts others as one's own can he help them. Limiting oneself to one's own self or to one's near and dear one limits one's vision. With limited vision paropakāra is simply impossible. It is only when one opens up that one can pray for all that they cross all hurdles, that they have all their desires fulfilled, that they get happiness everywhere:

*sarvas taratu durgāṇi sarvo bhadraṇi paśyatu
sarvaḥ kāmān avāpnotu sarvaḥ sarvatra nandatu*²⁶॥

With audārya also goes santoṣa, contentment. With this one loses greed. One is satisfied with what one has. With that comes peace of mind which simply is invaluable:

*sadā santuṣṭamanasaḥ sarvāḥ sukhamayā diśaḥ
śarkarākaṇṭakādibhyo yatropānatpadam śivam*²⁷॥

“For a person who has contentment in mind all the quarters give happiness all the time like the comfort to the one well protected with shoes from gravel and thorns”.

A person could be very rich, still he could be very mean, not sharing his wealth with others, not even spending on himself. The real richness lies in the magnanimity of the mind which simply is invaluable:

*ādhyatvam nāma tad idam
cittaudāryam pragyate
nādhyatvam dhanavattvam yad
akiñcanasamam matam*²⁸॥

Santoṣa, contentment is said to be the greatest treasure, the only one at that, of man, param nidhānam. There could be, as indeed there are, other treasures as well but they are all transitory, kṣayāntāḥ, as they are described. They come and go but certainly not santoṣa, contentment. It reflects the mental health. Once in it, one does not hanker after material things which in any case cannot provide real happiness which can come about only through tranquillity going with contentment. Rightly says the Padmapurāṇa:

*santoṣāmṛtatṛptānām yat sukham śāntacetasām
kutas tad dhanalubdhānām itaś cetaś ca dhāvātām*²⁹॥

“How can those who run about in greed of wealth have that happiness that those tranquil in mind satiated with the nectar of contentment have?”

One of the five *niyamas*, the duties prescribed for a man (which are not obligatory, a point that distinguishes them from the other types of duties, the *yamas*), *santoṣa* means not to crave for more than that which can be managed within the means available, *sannihitasāadhanād adhikasyānupāditsā*. It is a mental state which could be just inborn in a man, *sahaja* or could be acquired through association with the good people. In no case it means loss of desires; it only signifies limiting them to means available, to derive the same comfort and ease even within one's limited resources as one would have derived in prolific ones. It is this that would not make a person eye with jealousy the rich life-style of the neighbour and lose his equanimity. A wise man has rightly said that if fate is to bestow crown, it bestows it in the form of contentment. One who suffers from craving even hundreds of miles is no distance while for a contented person even an object come to hand means nothing:

*na yojanaśatam dūram bādhyamānasya tṛṣṇayā
santuṣṭasya karaprāpte 'py arthe bhavati nādarah³⁰ ||*

Whatever is just needed to maintain themselves (lit. by which the stomach could be filled) is what the people can call their own. One who takes more than that to be so is a thief deserving of punishment:

*yāvad bhriyeta jaṭharam tāvat svatvam hi dehinām
adhikam yo 'bhimanyeta sa steno daṇḍam arhati³¹ ||*

Nature has provided enough for everybody on the earth. One who appropriates to oneself a larger share of its resources, deprives others of the same to that extent which is at the source of all deprivation, misery and distress. It is advisable for such a person to share the excess resources with his less fortunate brethren to bring back to them which is rightfully theirs. Such a person will have in his mind unlimited happiness, *saukhyam atulam*, no botheration, *na duḥkham*, no mental torture, *tāpaḥ*, no enemy, *na ca ripuḥ³²*.

The present discussion on *santoṣa* could well be closed with its definition, a rare one indeed in Sanskrit literature which the *Jābālayoga* furnishes in the following words:

*yadrcchālābhato nityam prītir yā jāyate nṛṇām |
tat santoṣam viduḥ prājñāḥ parijñānaikatatparāḥ*³³ ||

“The pleasure that people derive from what comes to them as a matter of course, the wise who are solely devoted to the pursuit of knowledge know as *santoṣa*”.

One of the other *niyamas* along with *santoṣa* of the ten of them enumerated by Atri:

*śaucam iṣyā tapo dānam svādhyāyopasthanigrahaḥ |
vratamaunopāvasam ca snānam ca niyamā daśa*³⁴

is *śauca*, purity.

It has been defined as avoiding a prohibited article of food, associating with the non-defamed ones and sticking to right conduct:

*abhakṣyaparihāraś ca saṁsargaś cāpy aninditaiḥ |
ācāre ca vyavasthānam śaucam etat prakṛtitam*³⁵ ||

According to the *Cāṇakya-rājanītiśāstra* it is of five types: compassion for all beings; control over the senses; truthfulness; mental purity and, the fifth one, purification by water:

*sarvabhūta-dayā śaucam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ |
satyam śaucam manaḥ śaucam jalaśuddhis tu pañcamam*³⁶ ||

In more compact form it is divided into three categories: physical, mental and intellectual:

*svadehamalanirmokṣo mṛjja-lābhyām mahāmune |
aḥam śuddham iti jñānam śaucam āhur maṇiṣiṇaḥ*³⁷ ||

“According to the wise, O great sage! The removal of the dirt of the body by the earth and the water is external purification. Cogitation is the mental purification while (the feeling that) ‘I am pure’ is intellectual purification.”

Of these the knowledge purification stands at the apex.

It is this which should be assiduously sought. External purification is all right but it has to be followed up by internal one:

*bāhyaśaucena yuktaḥ saṁs tathā cābhyantaram caret*³⁸,

“After purifying oneself externally (by bath etc.) one should also purify oneself internally.”

As is clear from the above, in the order of purification, the physical purification comes first. That is the *sine qua non* of any kind of purification, however lower in gradation it may be. Indian tradition lays great store by bath, the primary source of physical purification, for it is this which can make a person feel fresh after the night's sleep or the afternoon slumber or after the day's hard toil, particularly so in a tropical country like India where for most part of the year it is hot and humid with all the perspiration and body odours. A shower or a swim in a pool or pond or a river takes away the sloth. One feels thereby more active and alert. That is why it is said that “one may ignore a thousand things but bath one must have”, (*śataṁ vihāya bhoktavyam*) *sahasraṁ snānam ācare!* With the root meaning connected with bath the words connected with rivers or their banks or their currents though ostensibly used in different meanings such as *snātaka*, *abhiṣeka*, *pārāvāra*, *pārīṇa*, *anukūla*, *pratikūla*, *anūpa*, *pratīpa*, etc. point to the act of bathing and the need of water for the same and the physical purity thereby.

With freshness achieved by physical purity the mental purity is just a step further. With mental purity the intellect would shine out and the true realization of oneself attained. The ancient texts emphasize that one has to continue with the follow up steps and not stop at physical purity only which howsoever good and desirable is not the be end and all end of life. One has to go on to the final step of knowledge purification. Says the *Jābālayoga*:

jñānaśaucam parityajya bāhye yo ramate naraḥ!
*sa mūḍhaḥ kāñcanam tyaktvā loṣṭhaṁ grhṇāti suvrata*³⁹||

“O Suvrata, one who is given to (lit. takes delight) in external purification in preference to the knowledge purification, that ignorant one, is just picking up a lump of earth in preference to gold.”

If a person is impure, is prone to evil thoughts, is subject to baser instincts, his physical purity has no meaning. He may have washed his body clean but his mind may continue to be unclean even if following rigorously the regimen of hygiene. That is what the *Lingapurāṇa* purports to say when it declares "Do the best of the Brahmins, get clean by regular (lit. always) bath in water? So one should always carry out, as per the procedure, internal cleansing:

*sadāvagāhya salile viśuddhāḥ kiṃ dvijottamāḥ |
tasmād ābhyantaram śaucam sadā kāryam vidhānataḥ*⁴⁰ ||

The internal cleansing has been explained as

*saumukhyād abhisamprītir arthinām darśane sadā |
satkṛtiś cānasūyā ca tadā śuddhir iti smṛtā*⁴¹ ||

"To always receive supplicants with pleasant face on seeing them, to honour them and not to have ill-will for them".

The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* explains as to which things are purified by what

*adbhiḥ śudhyanti gātrāṇi buddhir jñānena śudhyati |
ahimsayā ca bhūtātmā maṅgḥ satyena śudhyati*⁴² || ✕

"The limbs are purified by water, the intellect by knowledge, the self by non-violence (as per the *Manusmṛti* by knowledge and austerities: *vidyātapobhyām bhūtātmā*) and the mind by truth."

The purification automatically goes with certain objects, like people who follow the conduct which is ideally expected of them. Underground water, a woman devoted to her husband, a king solicitous of (the welfare) of his subjects and a contented Brahmin are pure:

*śuci bhūmigataṁ toyam śucir nārī pativrataḥ |
śuciḥ kṣemaṅkaro rājā santoṣī brāhmaṇaḥ śuciḥ*⁴³

There is much talk of corruption these days. To stay clean in financial matters was very well recognized by ancient thinkers of India. That man is pure who is pure in financial matters: *yo 'rthe śuciḥ sa śuciḥ*.⁴⁴

All these qualities and others add up to what *śīla* is. It is an enigmatic term which is all-comprehensive as should be clear from the following stanza of the *Nītiśataka* (No. 80) of *Bhartrhari*:

*aiśvaryasya vibhūṣaṇam sujanatā śauryasya vāksamīyamo
jñānasyopaśamaḥ śrutasya vinayo vittasya pātre vyayaḥ
akrodhas tapasaḥ kṣamā prabhavitur dharmasya nirvyājatā
sarveṣāṃ api sarvakāraṇam idaṃ śīlam param bhūṣaṇam*⁴⁵||

"Goodness is the ornament of prosperity, restraint in speech of that of bravery, tranquillity of that of knowledge, humility of that of learning, investment in a deserving case of that of money, absence of anger of that of austerities, forgiveness of that of the mighty, absence of pretension of that of *dharma*, *śīla*, the all round source of all these, is the best of the ornaments".

This very point is reinforced when it is said that there is no ornament like *śīla*: *vibhūṣaṇam śīlasamam na cānya*⁴⁶

It is for this reason that it is praised sky high all through Indian tradition. One who lives while observing it lives in reality: *śīlasya pālanam kurvan śyo jīvati sa jīvati*⁴⁷ It is like a guide in a dreary forest: *śīlam hi śaraṇam saumya kāntāra iva deśikaḥ*⁴⁸. *Śīla* removes stigma of the family as also the dirt (*mala*) of sin. It adds to merit, spreads fame, bends the deities, removes the host of obstacles and leads to the attainment of heaven as also salvation with ease."

Śīla is lack of hostility towards all beings in word, mind and action, compassion and charity:

*adroham sarvabhūteṣu karmaṇā manasā girā
anugrahaś ca dānam ca śīlam etat praśasyate*⁴⁹||

One who does not have it, knowledge, learning, austerities, riches, the spreading fame—all are like the bath of an elephant:

*vidyā śrutam tapo vā 'py aiśvaryaṃ vā yaśaḥprakarṣo vā
śīlarahitasya puṃso dviradasnānopamaṃ bhavati*⁵⁰||

At this point it is pertinent to pause and think as to what this *śīla* which is spoken of in superlative terms means. The *Āmarakoṣa* explains it at two places. At one place it interprets it

as pure conduct, *śucau tu carite śīlam*⁵¹ while at another as nature or good conduct, *śīlam svabhāve sadvṛtte*⁵² (III.3.202). It, however, appears that *śīla* is much more than just good conduct. It is an innate goodness in man, a reservoir of good qualities that imparts him rare strength of character. It is not easy to define it nor is it easy to translate it. It is that sublimity that is felt to exist but which is difficult to describe. Right or good conduct is a poor rendering of it, not able to capture its spirit that goes far beyond it. It is this that makes a person easily approachable, *abhigamya* and impossible of being overawed, *adhr̥ṣya*. It is inner strength born of a myriad qualities that propels a person to follow the right path and shun the wrong one. It is this strength that imparts a rare equanimity to a person which makes him impervious to the totally contrary situations in life and facing them with the same evenness. The great remain the same when favoured by fortune or visited by adversity: *sampattaū ca vipattaū ca mahatām ekarūpatā*, like the sun which is red when it rises and red when it sets, *udayan savitā raktaḥ rakta evāstam eti ca*. When told first that he was to be anointed a king and then that he was to be exiled, Rāma's face showed no expression, *nālakṣayata rāmasya kañcid ākāram ānane*⁵³ (*ākāra* = expression). There was no perturbation in his mind as he was preparing to leave for the forest forsaking (the rule over) the earth as if he was different from all others:

*na vanam gantukāmasya tyajataś ca vasundharām |
sarvalokātigasyeva lakṣyate cittavikriyā*⁵⁴ ||

It is this quality which makes a person look out of the ordinary. Where the devils would not dare to tread, the angels would walk easily.

In the *Mahābhārata* once Yudhiṣṭhira asked Bhīṣma as to why it is that while describing *dharma* everybody first talks of *śīla* and that he should explain it to him as to what it is. The latter told the former that the same question Duryodhana had put to his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra when he (Duryodhana) was seething with jealousy at your excessive prosperity in former days at Indraprastha. Dhṛtarāṣṭra had told him that it is possible to

conquer all the worlds with śīla. He had underlined its importance in the following words:

*śīlena hi trayo lokāḥ śakyā jetuṃ na saṃśayaḥ |
nahi kiñcid asādhyam vai loke śīlavatām bhavet⁵⁵ ||*

“There is no doubt that with śīla (all) the three worlds are possible of conquest. For people possessed of śīla there is nothing impossible of achievement in this world.”

Proceeding further he recounts to him the story of Prahlāda and Indra. By means of śīla Prahlāda wrested the kingdom of heaven from Indra which made him repair to Bṛhaspati which gave him knowledge to bring peace to his distraught mind. When Indra wanted more of it, Bṛhaspati asked him to go to Śukrācārya, who when approached, asked Prahlāda to pass on his śīla to Indra which he did. One by one a quality after quality like truth, satya, might/lustre, tejas, strength, bala came out of the body of Prahlāda and entered into that of Indra. With śīla gone, the royal fortune forsook him. On being asked as to why she was doing so, she said:

*śīlena hi trayo lokāḥ tvayā dharmajña nirjitāḥ |
tad vijñāya surendreṇa tava śīlam hr̥tam prabho⁵⁶ ||*

“O ye, the knower of dharma, thou had conquered the three worlds through śīla. Having come to know of it, O Lord, Indra has wrested your śīla from thee.”

It is no wonder then that śīla is proclaimed as the best of the ornaments, param bhūṣaṇam. Leave aside the worldly ornaments which are prone to decay and disappearance unlike śīla which is constant, even the ornaments in the form of qualities severally would not stand up before śīla, that being an aggregate of them and more.

Śīla is not unoften referred to by the term vr̥tta. Overwhelming importance is attached to its observance. It is said that one should keep it up assiduously while wealth vitta, (a word phonetically close to vr̥tta but miles apart in sense) comes and goes. One does not lose anything if one loses wealth, vitta, but

with the loss of character (that is the nearest equivalent of it, everything is lost:

*vṛttam yatnena samrakṣyam vittam āyāti yāti ca
akṣiṇo vittataḥ kṣiṇo vṛttatas tu hato hataḥ*⁵⁷ ||

As said earlier, it is not possible to give a single line definition of śīla. Śīla is like śīla just as we say sky is like sky or ocean is like ocean, *gaganam gaganākāram sāgaraḥ sāgaropamaḥ*. It is a great fortune to come together with a person endowed with śīla. Rightly does a Subhāṣita say:

*kiṁ madhunā kiṁ vidhunā
kiṁ sudhayā kiṁ ca vasudhayā 'khilayā
yadi hrdayahāricaritaḥ puruṣaḥ
punar eti nayanayor ayanam* ||

“What has one to do with honey, the moon, the nectar as also with the whole earth, if a person with captivating character and conduct comes to view (lit. comes within the range of eyes).

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Dhairya

To remain firm in the face of adversity is a trait of character that is key to success in life. Mostly inborn, it can be cultivated also under advice from the wise or through the sheer force of circumstances. There do come moments in life when a person finds himself on the verge of losing self-control. Were he to collect himself at that moment, he may be able to chart for himself a new course. Though easier said than done, he has to be firm and not go under the pressure of emotions, sentiments and feelings. That is the purport of the advice of Vasiṣṭha to Aja not attending to the affairs of the State, as goes the story in Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa, on account of the grievous loss of his beloved wife Indumatī: *drumasānumatoḥ kim antaram yadi vāyau dvitaye 'pi te calāh'*¹, "what distinction would be there between a tree and a mountain if they both were to shake under the impact of wind". One has to continue standing up against all odds and not to wilt. That is the sign of true conduct. It is the quality of steadfastness that occupies the first place among the indications, *lakṣaṇas*, of right conduct:

*dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo 'steyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ |
dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam*² ||

It is *dhṛti* which is most important. It is this which enables one to accomplish the most difficult of the things in the most adverse of the circumstances in life with equanimity which wins appreciation all round. After the anointment of Rāma as Heir Apparent had been announced he was called into his presence by

his father through Sumantra, the chariteer completely oblivious of the goings on in the Palace. As he in high spirits noticing the joy of the people was face to face with his father Daśaratha who with Kaikeyī by his side did not greet him as usual being completely down and out, Kaikeyī told him of the episode of the two boons promised by the latter (Daśaratha) which she had asked for the boons being coronation of Bharata as king and his (Rāma's) exile in the forest for fourteen years. This sudden turn of events against him did have no impact on him. Neither did he, the noble one, feel sad, nor shaken:

*na caiva rāmaḥ praviveśa śokam.*³

There was no disturbance in his mind in his proceeding to the forest and leaving the earth (the kingdom) as it would be in the case of the one who is emancipated:

*na vanam gantukāmasya tyajataś ca vasundharām |
sarvalokātigasyeva lakṣyate cittavikriyā*⁴ ||

Rāma seemed to lose *dhairya* when he found the cottage bereft of Sītā on coming back to it after killing Mārica but collected himself after some time, formed an alliance with the monkeys and the bears and after a fight with their help with all powerful Rāvaṇa recovered Sītā.

It is ingrained in the very nature of the great souls to remain steady even in adversity and maintain their cool. As says the Hitopadeśa:

*vipadi dhairyam athābhyudaye kṣamā
sadasi vākpaṭutā yudhi vikramaḥ |
yaśasi cābhirucir vyasanam śrutau
prakṛtisiddham idam hi mahātmanām*⁵ ||

“Fortitude in adversity, forbearance in prosperity, eloquence in an assembly, valour in battlefield, a liking for fame and a strong attachment to study—these are the natural possessions of magnanimous”.

When he picked up struggle against the British, Mahatma Gandhi was not unaware of the strength of the mighty British empire, nor was Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in raising the

Indian National Army with practically no resources. Still they carried on. Sheer persistence paid and they were able to restore the country to freedom. The same is true of the countless freedom fighters who braved unflinchingly the atrocities of the foreign rulers and did not lose heart. They continued to be in high spirits till the last moment:

*prārabhyate na khalu vighnabhayena nīcāḥ
prārabhya vighnavihataḥ viraṣṭmanti madhyāḥṇi
vighnāḥ punaḥ punar api pratihanyamānāḥ
prārabhya cottamaguṇā na parityajanti*⁶

The sane advice is that one should not give up steadiness and fortitude even if time is not favourable:

*tyājyaṁ na dhairyaṁ vidhure 'pi kāle.*⁷

If one could control oneself, the possibility is that one may succeed: *dhairyāt kadācid gatim āpnuyāt saḥ.*⁸ Even if there is shipwreck, a brave person would not flinch from taking to swimming. History furnishes instances when people actually swam the ocean. The classic example is that of Veer Savarkar who had jumped into the sea in the icy cold winter near Paris.

If one were to look for the criterion for steadfastness, its definition in simple understandable terms, one has to turn to Kālidāsa:

*vikārahetau sati vikriyante yeṣāṁ na cetānsi ta eva dhūrāḥ.*⁹

"They alone are self-controlled whose minds are not affected, even if the cause thereof is present."

Another definition of steadfastness could be "to maintain uniformity in both adversity and prosperity:

*sampattau ca vipattau ca mahatām ekarūpatāḥ
udayan savita rakto rakta evāstam eti ca*¹⁰

"The great remain the same both in prosperity and adversity. The sun is red when it rises, it is red when it sets."

True it is that such people are rare in this world:

*sampadi yeṣāṁ na harṣo
vipadi viṣādo raṇe ca bhīrutvam*

*taṁ bhuvanatrayatīlakam
janayati janantī sutam viralam||*

“A mother rarely gives birth to a son, an ornament of the three worlds, who does not rejoice in prosperity nor does feel sorrow in adversity and is firm in battle.”

Such a person who has made fortitude or forbearance natural to him would never give it up even if he were to be oppressed (by adversity). The flame of fire even when overturned never proceeds downward:

*kadarthitasyāpi hi dhairyavṛtter
na śakyate dhairyaguṇaḥ pramārṣtum|
adhomukhasyāpi kṛtasya vahnēr
nādhah śikhā yāti kadācid eva||¹²*

The people endowed with steadiness never allow their minds to waver or to lose their clarity. That is their forte. Were they to do so, they would not be steadfast then. It is these people who once taken a resolve would not budge even when faced with myriad problems: *kṛcchre pi na calaty eva dhīrānām niścalam manaḥ*. Obstacles would look too small before their will power. The earth would give to them the look of the house courtyard, the ocean of a canal, the nether world of a patch of land and Sumeru an anthill:

*aṅganavedī vasudhā
kulyā jaladhiḥ sthālī ca pātālam|
valmīkaś ca suneruḥ
kṛtapratijñasya dhīrsaya||¹³*

Many of the explorations and inventions owe themselves to such people. Who knows how many years they spent in deep impenetrable forests to study the wild life or in the oceans to explore the marine life exposing themselves to all sorts of risks. Many of them even sacrificed their lives. It needed a Stein to discover manuscripts in Gobi desert and a Rahul Sankrityayan to find them in Tibet and an S.R. Rao to discover the submerged Dwaraka, an Edmund Hillary and a Sherpa Tenzing to conquer Mount Everest and a host of astronauts to conquer space with a

landing on the moon and the Mars. It is to such people, the human dynamos, that humanity owes much of its progress. Once they chart a course for themselves, there is no going back for them. They would not stop till they achieve their objective: *na niścītārthād viramanti dhīrāḥ*.¹⁴ No amount of inducements or the scare of something untoward happening to them would deflect them from their course. As says Bhartrhari in support of his assertion that the steady ones do not rest till they achieve their mission; the gods did not rest content (while churning the milk ocean) by hitting upon valued gems, nor did they get scared with deadly poison.¹⁵ They did not rest till they had laid their hands on nectar. Further on he terms that person to be steadfast in real sense whom the arrows of the side-glances of the damsels do not pierce, nor does the heat of the fire of anger singe his mind, nor pull towards him the manifold sense objects with nooses of greed. Such a person conquers all the three worlds:

*kāntākāṭākṣaviśikhā na tudanti yasya
cittam na nirdahati kopakṣānutāpaḥ
karṣanti bhūri viṣayāś ca na lobhapāśair
lokatrayam jayati kṛtsnam idam sa dhīraḥ*¹⁶

The same Bhartrhari asserts at still another place that the *dhīras*, the people firm in their resolve, do not step away from the righteous path, *nyāyyāt pathaḥ*, unmindful of the fact whether those versed in polity speak well or ill of them, whether Dame prosperity comes to them or leaves them, whether they die that very day or in another aeon.¹⁷ Nothing can change their mind resolutely fixed on desired objects like water flowing on a downward course: *ka īpsitārthasthiraniścayaṁ manaḥ payaś ca nimnābhimukhaṁ pratīpayet*.¹⁸ For such people personal comfort or discomfort have no meaning: *manasvī kāryārthī na gaṇayati duḥkhaṁ na ca sukhaṁ*.¹⁹ These people whatever they undertake, they carry out relentlessly. A reference may be made here to the classic episode of King Hariścandra recorded in the Purāṇas. He was assigned the duty of collecting tax for the cremation ground. He did not spare even his wife reduced to utmost penury and made her part with a part of her *sari* when she had repaired to it to say

final goodbye to her son. Rana Pratap of Mewar having made up his mind not to surrender his freedom to the mighty emperor Akbar wandered in the jungles with no food for himself and the members of his family for days on end. He literally had to eat grass but kept his head high. Such people are dhīras, the embodiment of the quality of dhairya and have carved a niche for themselves in the annals of the world.

If one can maintain one's equanimity and is not too much perturbed by adversity or financial troubles, one can find a way out of one's difficulties. For, with equanimity the mind does not lose clarity and with clarity one can find a way to solve one's problems however intractable they may be. There is always light at the end of the tunnel, as goes the saying. But then one must have the stamina to go up to the end and not get perished in the tunnel itself. For, what are needed are patience, perseverance and strong will which is all that the word dhairya connotes.

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Cittaśuddhi

Nature has endowed man with all kinds of feelings, good or bad, the good feelings like love, compassion, sympathy, contentment, the bad feelings like envy, jealousy, aversion, hatred and so on. It is for him now to choose between the two. If he goes in for the good feelings, he will have his mind in peace. Keeping away the evil thoughts is what is *cittaśuddhi*, the purity of mind. With this purity, *prasāda*, he will steer clear of all his troubles, as says the Lord in the Gītā: *prasāde sarvaduḥkhānām hānir asyopajāyate*¹ and when the mind is at peace, is tranquil, *prasannacetasah*², the intellect becomes at once steadfast and unswerving, *buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*.³ It has no prevarication, no indecision, no ambivalence. With this intellect a person can take clear stand on an issue and adhere firmly to it. Clarity or perspicuity of the mind therefore, is the pre-requisite to clear thinking and right approach to things. That is why the scriptures enjoin cleansing of the mind: x

*cittam viśodhayet tasmāt kim anyair bāhyaśodhanaiḥ
bhāvataḥ saṁviśuddhātmā svargaṁ mokṣaṁ ca vindati*⁴

“Hence one should cleanse the mind. What use have other types of cleansings? He who is pure in mind attains heaven and salvation.” With this tranquillity in the mind one destroys actions, good or bad. A tranquil soul is stationed in his self and attains eternal happiness.

The cleansing of the mind is easier said than done. The Lord agrees with Arjuna’s formulation: *cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa*

pramāthi balavad dr̥ḍham.⁵ O Kṛṣṇa, besides being naturally unsteady, mind is tormenting, strōṅg and unyielding. Its control is difficult as the control of the wind: *tasyāhaṁ nigrāhaṁ manye vāyor iva suduṣkaram*⁶. The Lord's comment at this is that it can be brought under control by abhyāsa and vairāgya, practice and renunciation.

But then *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* are not that easy. They are hard austerities in themselves. In Chapter XVII of the *Gītā* the Lord enumerates three types of penance, *sārira*, bodily, physical; *vāimaya*, verbal and *mānasa*, mental. The *mānasa tapas*, penance is the steadfastness of the mind, to have pleasing outlook (= not to have cruel thoughts), silence, self-control and purity of thoughts (= casting away the deceptive and cunning thoughts):

*manahprasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ
bhāvasaṁsuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam ucyate*⁷

Though coming last in the order of mention in the *Gītā*, the *mānasa tapas* is more important than the others being the base for them. With the cleansing of the mind would be cleansed the speech and the body which would feel the need to purge itself of its impurity/ies. It is the mind, therefore, that has to be cleansed first with conscious effort, *abhyāsa* and the rest of the cleansing would be just a corollary to it. It has to be śivasankalpa, of good feelings, of good resolve, for, if that were so, the sense-organs, the *indriyas*, would be in proper order being at their best. It is the mind only which is the cause of bondage and release; *mana eva manuṣyāṇāṁ kāraṇaṁ bandhamokṣayoḥ*.⁸ The *rāga* and *dveṣa*, the love and hatred have their habitat in the mind. A mind freed of these passions would not flounder. It will have all the ease, all the tranquillity.

To achieve this one need not have to renounce the world. One can be in the thickness of worldly affairs and still remain unaffected by them. Since he would have developed detachment, his actions would not be tinged with subjectivity and would, therefore, be correct. Such a person would develop with mind undisturbed, *anupaplutacetasaḥ*, such a vision as to be able to

see through the past and the future: *atītānāgatajñānam pratyakṣān na viśiṣyate*.⁹

Of the many requirements for achieving *sattvaśuddhi*, the mental purity, one is *āhāraśuddhi*, purity of food. The Upaniṣad declares: *āhāraśuddhau sattvaśuddhiḥ*, pure mind goes with pure food. So does it go with purified body. Hence extreme emphasis on both in Indian culture: *śataṁ vihāya bhoktavyaṁ sahasraṁ snānam ācaret*, one should set aside hundred things and have food and set aside a thousand things and have bath. Bath leads to freshness which leads to mental freshness.

Since the very ancient period the sages have prayed that their mind should have good resolve, *me manaḥ śivasankalpam astu*;¹⁰ may we be with auspicious mind, *aganmahi manasā saṁ śivena*,¹¹ may my heart be free from sorrow, *asatāpam me hrdayam*,¹² I place in front the good thought, *ākūtiṁ devīm subhagām puro dadhe*.¹³

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Aucitya

It is necessary to achieve balance in life. All actions of a person need to be governed by the principle of aucitya. With that one can lead a trouble free life.

Aucitya is formed from the base word *ucita*, fit, proper, suitable. Now it is for an individual to decide what is fit or proper for him in a given situation. The scriptures, the preceptors, the elders can guide him in this or provide him with necessary inputs to take decisions.

Aucitya could vary with varied situations. What may be suitable in a particular situation may be unsuitable in another.

What is necessary for aucitya is to be clear-headed, the capacity to exercise judgement and to get along with the advice of well-wishers. It also requires knack of assessing situations and sifting the right options from among the many. It also implies acquaintance with social and religious norms transgression of which contribute to impropriety which may land one in troubles.

Then there are precedents of which one has to be aware in taking decisions.

While thinking of aucitya, propriety, one has to take note of anaucitya, the impropriety, too. The knowledge of negatives would provide a person with the vision for the positive.

Aucitya has different facets, physical, mental, intellectual, spiritual and verbal.

The physical facet first. The Gītā enunciates the need for a healthy body:

*yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥ*॥

“He who is moderate in food, moderate in recreations moderate in necessary action, moderate in sleep and moderate in awakening, can practice the Dhyānayoga, meditation, which is the destroyer of grief.”

There is an old anecdote which tellingly emphasizes limited intake of wholesome food to keep off diseases and ailments with the procurement of rightful means. It is said that once the mythical physician Dhanvantari was going in a forest. A bird who knew who he was started chirping: *ko'ruk, ko 'ruk, ko'ruk*, which besides representing the onomatopoetic sound of the bird also carried the query *kaḥ aruk*, who is free from disease, who does not court disease. The physician smiled at the clever way of putting forth the query by the bird and answered in the same refrain: *hitabhuk mitabhuk ṛtabhuk so 'ruk, so 'ruk so'ruk*, one who helps himself with wholesome food in limited quantity procured by rightful means is free from disease, is free from disease, is free from disease. The *aucitya* for physical well-being is three-fold: (i) food should be had in limited quantity, (ii) it should be wholesome and (iii) it should have been acquired by rightful means (this has spiritual dimensions).

It is said that one who eats in limited quantity (actually) eats much: *yo mitam bhunkte sa bahu bhunkte*, in that he has long life and his total intake of food is much more than that of one who overeats and shortens his life span reducing thereby his total intake of food in comparison to the one who continues to live long.

The texts on Āyurveda prescribe which items of food one should have and in which period of time. They enjoin the eating of fruits in the morning with the exception of banana and cucumber. *prātaḥ phalāni bhojyāni kadalīm karkaṭīm vina*. One may have curd during the day time but not in the night: *na naktam dadhi bhuñjīta*. The food is classified as per the constitution of the people into three categories *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasika*. Just as with food, so is it with drink. The rule is that one should have

water frequently but each time only in small quantity, *muhur muhur vāri pibed abhūri*.² Further, one should have water in the course of the meal but not before or after it. The water drunk before the start of the meal leads to loss of appetite, that drunk after it is as harmful as poison:

*bhojanādāv agnihāri madhye tad amṛtopamam |
bhojanānte viṣaṁ vāri vāriṇas trividhā gatiḥ*³ ||

Propriety demands that one should have food in a happy mood. Mark the injunction: *prasannamukho 'nnāni bhuñjīta*. That helps in the digestion. Food partaken in pensive and depressed mood or in a mood of anxiety or worry leads more to harm than to good. While eating it is imperative that one should not condemn it or find fault with it for that would release such fluids in the body that would turn it harmful; *annaṁ na nindyāt*.⁴ It is also necessary that one should have food in the company of the good people and at a neat and clean place. One should not also allow the time for meals to pass, *bhojanavelātikrame cikitsakā doṣam udāharanti*,⁵ physicians consider it wrong to skip the normal time for meals (a common enough phenomenon these days when under heavy work-load people have lunch late afternoons or dinner around midnight or just gulp down a few morsels or help themselves with what goes by the name of junk food or combine breakfast and lunch and have what they call 'brunch'). The rule is: *śataṁ vihāya bhoktavyam*,⁶ one should keep aside a hundred things and have food first. Just as it is with food, so is it with bath. This is even more important. No consideration should overrule it or delay it. "Keep aside a thousand things and have bath first. *sahasraṁ snānam ācaret*.⁷

Coming to verbal *aucitya*, the most important thing is judicious choice of words, as says the *Manusmṛti*:

*dṛṣṭipūtaṁ nyaset pādaṁ vastrapūtaṁ jalaṁ pibet |
satyapūtaṁ vaded vācaṁ manḥpūtaṁ samācaret*⁸

"One should set foot purified by one's sight, drink water purified by cloth, utter speech purified by truth and adopt a conduct purified by mind." Further on the *Smṛti* says that one

should bear patiently harsh words and not insult anybody. The Śruti enjoins uttering of words coated with honey. *madhumayīm vācam*.⁹ It is imperative that one should avoid insulting speech which is the root cause all enmities, *sā yoniḥ sarvavairāṇām*.¹⁰

The mental *aucitya*, propriety consists of not thinking ill of anybody, not hatching plots to harm others.

The quality of *aucitya* the *Dharmāmṛta* proclaims to be superior to even a crore (millions) of other qualities: *guṇakoṭyā tulākoṭim yad ekam api īkate*.¹¹ The reason for this is that it is the core quality. The rest of them are its offshoots. With its cultivation many of the wrongs that are likely to surface could be avoided or innocent pursuits may lead to harm if it is not kept up. One may indulge in drinking, gambling, enjoying women, hunting, singing and playing on instruments. It is overindulgence in them which is harmful, as says the *Mahābhārata*:

*pānam akṣās tathā nāryo mṛgayā gītavāditamī
etāni yuktyā seveta prasaṅgo hy atra doṣavānī*¹²

Similarly to aspire for something may have nothing bad about it but the compulsive wish to have it by whatever means is bad: *aucityam gaṇayati ko viśeṣakāmaḥ*.

It is very difficult to give a precise definition of *aucitya*. Scanning of old literature may not be of much help in this. Not to exceed the limit is one which one can have from the *Rāmāyana* hemistich *sarvatrātīkṛtam bhadre vyasanāyopakalpate*,¹³ "everywhere anything done in excess leads to peril." The context wherein this occurs is the remark of a demoness *Vinatā* to *Sītā* to surrender herself to *Rāvaṇa* the absence of which could mean the end of her life by her being devoured by the demoness guards.

Among the *Ālaṅkārikas* *aucitya* occurs as a literary theory. Kṣemendra has composed a full text on it under the title *Aucityavicāracarcā* where he discusses what should be proper in delineation of Rasas, figures of speech and the *Nāyaka-Nāyikās* and so on.

Considering the situation in which the word occurs or the negative of it, it appears it could be defined in simplistic terms

as 'that which goes well with a particular time or place, deśa and kāla. Anything that agrees with established custom, the socially accepted norms and time-honoured practice, with reference to a particular region (in another region the custom may vary and the norms may be different) is ucita, fit and proper. The otherwise of it is anucita, improper; propriety and impropriety being conditioned by above factors. If ucita is proper, aucitya is propriety.

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Audārya (Liberality)

The word audārya is formed from the word udāra which means liberal, magnanimous. This presupposes wider outlook. Those who go by the outlook that this man is mine and that man is alien are petty. For the magnanimous the whole earth is a big family:

*ayaṁ nijāḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām |
udāracaritānāṁ tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam:1*

To be good to one's own people has nothing special about it. That is as it is should be. To be good to opponents or adversaries is what is good in reality. It is this goodness which Rāma shows when he asks Vibhīṣaṇa to perform the last rites of Rāvaṇa after he had killed him, the abductor of his wife and the source of all his troubles in one of the fiercest of the battles terming him 'as one belonging as much to him (Vibhīṣaṇa) as to himself:

*maraṇāntāni vairāṇi nirvṛttaṁ naḥ prayojanam |
kriyatām asya saṁskāro mamāpy eṣa yathā tava:2*

"With death our enmity has come to an end and our object has been achieved: He (Rāvaṇa) is as dear to me as he is to you; perform, therefore, his funeral rites."

An old Sanskrit stanza highlights the quality of magnanimity:

*upakāriṇi yaḥ sādhuḥ sādhutve tasya ko guṇaḥ |
apakāriṇi yaḥ sādhuḥ sa sādhuḥ sadbhir ucyate:3*

"What special is about one who is good to one who has done him good; he (alone) is said to be good by the wise who has done him harm".

What is goodness if it has no magnanimity? In this connection it is interesting to recount an old story. It is said that once Jagannātha Triśūli, a poet friend of Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana, the noted litterateur and the occupant of the highest post of Vakil under emperor Akbar whom the poets of his time would repair with their compositions to check out on their quality recited a couplet composed by him:

*prāpya calān adhikārān śatruṣu mitreṣu bandhuvargeṣu
nāpakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ kiṁ kṛtaṁ tena||*

"If by occupying an authoritative post one caused no harm to enemies or obliged no friends and relatives, what has one done?" Khan-i-Khana listened to it, changed only the *mātrā*, vowel sign, in the first syllable in the second hemistich and recited back:

nopakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ kiṁ kṛtaṁ tena||

The figure of speech in the couplet is *Yathāsamākhyā*, the same order which would connect *apakṛtaṁ* of the original one with *śatruṣu*, and *upakṛtaṁ* used twice with each, *mitreṣu* and *bandhuvargeṣu* each, the friends and the kith and kin. By emending *apakṛtaṁ* to *upakṛtaṁ* and connecting it with *śatruṣu* Khan-i-Khana far surpassed in nobility Triśūli, because to him the position of authority meant doing good even to enemies! That is *audārya*.

Sītā showed this kind of *audārya* when Hanumat approached her with the news of Rāma's victory and the destruction of Rāvaṇa after the coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa and sought her permission to slay all the dreadful demonesses who had tortured her earlier with harsh words and cruel gestures. She asked him not to harm them, they having acted at the behest of their master. She forgave them for all their misdeeds: *dāsīnām rāvaṇasyāham marṣayāmi*⁴. All her trials and travails she attributes to her own adverse fate. Further on she says: *na kaścin nāparādhyati*,⁵ who is there who does not err?" Such is her generosity that she says that it is not proper to be cruel to as of them as take delight in sinful act:

*lokaḥimsāvihāraṇāṁ krūrāṇāṁ pāpkarmaṇāṁ
kurvatām api pāpāni naiva kāryam āśobhanam॥⁶*

ā ✓

In more recent times Mahatma Gandhi fought against the British to restore freedom to India, but he had no ill-will for the British people. He was fighting only the British imperialism. There was no ill-will or rancour in his mind for Britishers for whom he had all love and consideration. The same was the case with Jawaharlal Nehru who gladly joined the British Commonwealth, a comity of nations which had thrown off the British yoke under the leadership of Britain.

Kālidāsa furnishes a beautiful example of audārya in his Abhijñānaśākuntala. In its sixth Act the Prime Minister refers a case to King Duṣyanta for his decision. The chief merchant Dhanamitra dies in a shipwreck. Since he has no issue, his property as per the rule should vest in the state. That is the Prime Minister's opinion. The king, however, has a different view. When he finds on an enquiry that one of the wives of the merchant is carrying, he has it conveyed to the Prime Minister that it is the child in the womb who deserves to inherit the property. Further, he has it broadcast that if anyone among his subjects were to be bereaved, he himself should be taken to be the kith and kin in place of the one who has left for the heavenly abode:

*yena yena viyujante prajāḥ snigdheṇa bandhunāi
sa sa tāsām ṛte pāpād duṣyanata iti ghuṣyatām॥⁷*

The magnanimity, audārya not unoften leads to change of heart. The most wicked sometimes get impressed with it and turn a new leaf. Among the Buddhist Jātakas there is one which tells the story of a king of Kāśī called Śilavat. So good was he that he would not punish even his opponents. Not only that, he would even reward them. Once one of his ministers outraged the modesty of his queens. He reprimanded him and turned him out of his kingdom who then went over to the neighbouring king of Kosala and cleverly winning his confidence incited him to invade the kingdom of Kāśī much against the advice of his commanders with his very well-equipped army offering no resistance preferring

to court death rather than shedding blood. Under the orders of the invader the king of Kāśī and his ministers were dug neck deep in the sand of a river. As the jackals approached in the night to make a feast of them the king warded them off by loud hooting. With the scared jackals running away, the sand with their movement got loosened with the result that the king was able to pull out himself and being out himself he helped his ministers also to come out. In the meantime some people came and left a dead body in between the territories of the two Yakṣas. The Yakṣas not being able to divide the body in two equal halves, approached the king who did as asked. At his bidding the Yakṣas took him to the royal palace where the Kosala ruler finding him in front with a sword in hand could not make out as to how he could be there late in the night bypassing the guards. The Kāśī king told him all that had transpired. This sent the Kosala ruler to remorse. He was sorry that he was so cruel to a noble person like the Kāśī ruler. He begged him of forgiveness and returned his kingdom to him.

The *Mahābhārata* furnishes a few telling instances of *audārya*. The first one pertains to the period when the Pāṇḍavas were living in exile in the Dvaitavana near a lake as per the terms of Yudhiṣṭhira's defeat in the game of dice in Hastināpura court. Since Duryodhana was now in command, Karṇa and Śakuni wanted him to show off his prosperity to the Pāṇḍavas to incite jealousy in them and cause them despondency by hurting their pride. Under the pretext of visiting the cowherd stations on the outskirts of the kingdom, Duryodhana repaired to the Dvaitavana along with all his brothers, Karṇa, Śakuni and their wives with a large army and citizenry. He ordered his men to set up a camp along the lake to which Gandharvas who had already been there objected. In the fight between them and Duryodhana and his companions the Gandharva lord Citraratha defeated them and captured them. When Yudhiṣṭhira who along with his brothers was nearby came to know of it, he asked his brothers, much against the protestations of Bhīma, to rescue Duryodhana and his entourage, his plea being that there could be dissensions and

quarrels within the members of the family but that should be no reason that others should take advantage of it and that the family custom is snapped:

*bhavanti bheda jñātīnām kalahāś ca vṛkodaraḥ
prasaktāni ca vairāṇi kuladharmo na naśyatī*⁸

When an outsider challenges the family, the wise would not stand it. With this command the Pāṇḍavas fought with the Gandharvas and rescued Duryodhana and his cohorts. That was Yudhiṣṭhira's magnanimity. Any other person in his place would have welcomed the capture of his sworn enemy, relative or no relative, who had been an unending source of untold misery to him.

The same magnanimity Yudhiṣṭhira displays when he asks Bhīma and Arjuna to release Jayadratha who had tried to abduct Draupadī from her cottage when she was alone with all the Pāṇḍava brothers being away on hunting. Having come back and having come to know from crying Draupadī as to what had transpired in their absence Bhīma and others defeated Jayadratha's army and produced him before Yudhiṣṭhira who pardoned him and ordered his release, inspite of the most heinous act of abduction of Draupadī, be being a kinsman. It is a different matter that the same Jayadratha later asked for the boon from Śiva for the defeat of the Pāṇḍavas after propitiating him with penance to which he had agreed with the proviso that the same would be possible on a day when the Pāṇḍavas would not have Arjuna with them.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj was administered poison by one Jagannath alias Kaliya. He mixed it in milk which the Swami took in the night of September, 29, 1883, which gave him immense physical torment and ultimately took away his life. The Swami having come to know of his misdeed not only pardoned him but also gave him some money to enable him to escape to Nepal to avoid retribution.

In more recent history an Australian Christian missionary Abraham Stewart Staines who had been devoting his life in the

service of lepers was burnt alive along with his two minor sons in his van parked near his house by some miscreants. His wife Glady Staines even though in extreme pain at this gruesome event showed no anger and publicly pardoned the miscreants in true Christian spirit - the spirit in which Lord Christ had spoken the words: "O Lord, forgive them. They know not what they do".

uch Just as Mother Nature has endowed human beings with many good qualities, she has endowed them with bad qualities too. They are ahaṅkara, ego and mamakara, mineness, the feeling that such and thing is mine, the feeling of possessiveness. It is these two that limit the vision of man. The root cause of all discord, dissention and conflict in life is the feeling that 'this is mine and this is not'. What one claims as one's own, one has special attachment for it and what one thinks is of some one else, one has no attachment for it which in other words may mean indifference or aversion for it. The conflict between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas is compressed in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's query to Sanjaya, the starting point of the *Gītā*, māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś caiva kim akurvata sañjaya, 'what did do my sons and those of Pāṇḍu' - the old man forgetting that the Pāṇḍavas too should have been māmakas, mine, for him, they being his nephews.

The renunciation of mamakāra, it is mine, is what audārya is. Nīlakaṇṭha Dikṣita has very well put it:

a | tyāgavyo mamakāras tyaktum yadi śakyate so 'yam
kartavyo mamakārah kin tu sa sarvatra kartavyaḥ||

"Renounce ownership (the feeling that it is mine), if you can do that. Cultivate ownership but this should be for everything." The same idea Ācārya Śāṅkara expresses in the words:

tvayi mayi cānyatraiko viṣṇuḥ
vyaartham kupyasi mayi asahiṣṇuḥ
bhava samacittāḥ sarvatra tvam
vāñchasy acirād yadi viṣṇutvam||¹⁰

It is the same Viṣṇu who is in you, in me and elsewhere; through intolerance you are angry with me for nothing. You have the same feeling for everything, if you aspire to be Viṣṇu in all quickness.

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VII

प्रागैतिहासिक भारत में जातीय सम्मिश्रण

महाभारत

भारत एक ऐसा देश है जिसमें अनादि काल से अनेक जातियाँ रहती चली आ रही हैं। अनेक धर्मों, रीतिरिवाजों और विश्वासों का यह क्रीड़ास्थल रहा है। अनेक जातियाँ इस देश में किस प्रकार एक दूसरे के रंग में रंग कर अपनी पृथक् सत्ता खो बैठीं यह आज अजीब लगता है। पर इतना तथ्य है कि जिन चार प्रमुख जातीय तत्त्वों ने मिलकर भारतीय मानव को जन्म दिया उनकी पृथक् सत्ता कहीं भी न रही। सब कुछ घुल मिल गया। रक्त, भाषा और संस्कृति सभी एक हो गए। यह सब संभव इसलिए हुआ कि इस देश ने बहुत प्राचीन काल में ही मानव की प्रतिष्ठा की थी। इसी देश के उपनिषद्कार ने आत्मविभोर होकर कहा था—न मानुषाच्छ्रेष्ठतरं हि किञ्चित् और मनुष्य की श्रेष्ठता इसी में थी कि वह मनुष्य मात्र में नहीं, प्राणिमात्र में एकता का दर्शन कर ले। इस आत्मतत्त्व का दर्शन प्राचीन भारतीय मानव ने कर लिया था क्योंकि उसीके मुँह से ही यह स्वरलहरी प्रवाहित हुई थी—

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति।

सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते॥

जहाँ मनुष्यों में एक दूसरे के साथ मिलकर काम करने की प्रवृत्ति होती है वहाँ पृथक्त्व की भावना भी साथ ही साथ काम कर रही होती है। यही कारण है कि जहाँ व्यक्तियों से राष्ट्र बनता है वहाँ राष्ट्रों में परस्पर संघर्ष भी देखा जाता है। धार्मिक क्षेत्र में भी यही बात है। जहाँ धर्म कुछ व्यक्तियों को इकट्ठा करता है वहाँ उन्हें दूसरों से अलग भी करता है। यही कारण है कि मानव समाज शताब्दियों से आर्य-म्लेच्छ, हेलीन-बर्बर्ची, इज्राइल-गोय्यम, ईसाई-पेगन और मुसलमान-काफिर के परस्पर विरोधी वर्गों में बँटा हुआ है। पर यह विरोध तभी तक रह पाता है जब तक आत्मैकत्व का दर्शन नहीं किया जाता। भारतीय ऋषियों ने सृष्टि के आदि में ही इस आत्मैकत्व का दर्शन कर लिया था। समस्त विरोधों का परिहार और समन्वय का संस्थापन भारतीय सभ्यता की मूल भित्ति रही है। यही कारण है कि भारत में आने वाली अनेकानेक

जातियाँ इस प्रकार परस्पर घुलमिल गई कि अपना अस्तित्व ही खो बैठीं।

मुख्य रूप से इस देश में वैदिक आर्यों के आने से पहले चार जातियाँ आ चुकी थीं। सबसे पहली थी नीग्रायड या नीग्रिटो जो कि पाषाणकालीन सभ्यता के पहले ही अफ्रीका से चलकर अरब और ईरान के तटवर्ती भूभागों को पारकर पश्चिमी और दक्षिणी भारत में बस गई। उनमें से एक शाखा उत्तरी भारत में भी चली गई और वहाँ से मलाया और इंडोनेशिया द्वीपसमूहों (फिलपीन और न्यूगिनी) में भी पहुँच गई। यह नीग्रायड जाति बाद में आनेवाली जातियों के द्वारा या तो समाप्त कर डाली गई या अपने में ही मिला ली गई। इस जाति के थोड़े से वंशज अब भी दक्षिण भारत में पाए जाते हैं। वे तमिल भाषा से संबद्ध बोली बोलते हैं। कुछ लोग अंडमन (काला पानी) में भी पाए जाते हैं।

उन्हीं का यह प्रभाव था कि भारतीय मानव अन्य किसी राष्ट्र के प्रतिनिधि की अपेक्षा शारीरिक एवं मानसिक बनावट में बहुत अधिक उदार है।

प्रागैतिहासिक भारत में जो जातीय सम्मिश्रण हुआ उसे सुविधा के लिए तीन मुख्य भागों में विभक्त किया जा सकता है—रक्त का सम्मिश्रण, भाषा का सम्मिश्रण, संस्कृति का सम्मिश्रण।

रक्त का सम्मिश्रण

डा. सुनीति कुमार चटर्जी के शब्दों में जातीय सम्मिश्रण के लिये भाषा का सम्मिश्रण आवश्यक है। भरत में रहनेवाली विभिन्न जातियाँ एक दूसरे की भाषा को यदि समझने लगे तभी वे एक दूसरे से मिल सकती हैं। भाषा के सम्मिश्रण के उपरान्त रक्त का सम्मिश्रण प्रारंभ हुआ। आर्य, निषाद, किरात, द्रविड़-इन सब जातियों में परस्पर विवाह होने लगे। इन विवाहों से नई भारतीय जाति उपजी। धर्म-शास्त्रों और स्मृतिग्रंथों में जिन अनुलोम और प्रतिलोम विवाहों का उल्लेख पाया जाता है वे उस प्रागैतिहासिक काल में हुए इस रक्त के सम्मिश्रण की ओर ही संकेत करते हैं। महाभारत और स्मृति ग्रंथों में इन विवाहों को निंदनीय और घृणित बताया गया है। इससे यह तथ्य अवश्य प्रकाश में आता है कि ऐसे विवाह हुआ करते थे, और वणों तथा जातियों का संकर हो रहा था। महामहोपाध्याय डॉ. पी. वी. काणे ने अपने ग्रंथ धर्मशास्त्र का इतिहास (हिस्ट्री ऑफ धर्मशास्त्र) में और शैलेंद्रनाथ सेन गुप्त ने अपने दि कास्ट सिस्टम इन बंगाल नामक 1851 में प्रकाशित हुई जनगणना की रिपोर्ट के अध्याय में उन सब वर्णसंकरज जातियों का उल्लेख किया है।

प्राचीन काल में विशेषकर वैदिक युग में स्त्री को भी यज्ञयाग आदि का अधिकार होता था। वह उस समय तक तो ठीक था जब तक पुरुष और स्त्री दोनों ही आर्य जाति के होते थे। पर जब आर्यतर जाति की स्त्रियाँ आर्य घरानों में आने लगीं तब से

उन्हें इस अधिकार से वंचित कर दिया गया। बाद के धर्मशास्त्रों में तो शूद्रों और स्त्रियों को ओम् के उच्चारण का भी अधिकार नहीं दिया गया, कर्मकांड में भाग लेने का तो कहना ही क्या। संभवतः आर्येतर जाति की स्त्रियों की भाषा भिन्न होने के कारण और उच्चारण अन्य प्रकार का होने के कारण आर्यों को यह भय हुआ होगा कि ये स्त्रियाँ वेदमंत्रों का ठीक से उच्चारण न कर सकेंगी। अतः उन्हें वेदमंत्रों के उच्चारण के अधिकार से वंचित कर दिया गया। कालांतर में स्त्री जाति मात्र पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया गया। इस प्रकार आर्य स्त्रियाँ भी इस अधिकार से वंचित हो गईं।

भारत में आने के बाद आर्य जाति के लोगों का सुंदर शुभ्रवर्ण, जल वायु के प्रभाव के कारण अथवा वर्णसंकरत्व के कारण धीमे धीमे समाप्त होता जा रहा था। बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् में तीन प्रकार के आर्यों का उल्लेख पाया जाता है। शुक्ल, कपिल और श्याम जिन्हें वेद पढ़ने का अधिकार था। इनमें से श्याम सबसे अधिक चतुर होते थे। क्योंकि शुक्ल और कपिलों को क्रमशः एक और दो वेदों का ही अभ्यास होता था। श्याम तीनों वेदों में प्रवीण होते थे।

यद्यपि वर्णसंकर को समाज में बुरी दृष्टि से देखा जाता था तो भी उसे रोका नहीं जा सका। आदि में अंतर्जातीय विवाहों को इतना बुरा नहीं माना जाता था। बाद में जाति के बंधन दृढ़ होते चले गए और वर्णसंकर के प्रति घृणाकी भावना जोर पकड़ती चली गई। अति प्राचीनकाल में अंतर्जातीय विवाहों का प्रचुर उल्लेख मिलता है। और तो और महाभारत, जिसका दूसरा नाम भारतस्मृति है, और जिसे 'पंचमो वेदः' कहा जाता है, के रचयिता वेदव्यास की माता सत्यवती एक शूद्र (मछुए) की कन्या थी। वैसे महाभारत में ही व्यास के वर्णसंकरज होने के कलंक को धोने के लिये ही संभवतः एक कहानी पाई जाती है जिसके अनुसार सत्यवती अथवा मत्स्यगंधा, वास्तव में वसु उपरिचर की कन्या थी जो मछली के पेट से उत्पन्न हुई थी। यह कहानी इस तरह की अन्य कहानियों की तरह बाद में गढ़ी गई होगी इसमें तनिक भी संदेह नहीं। न केवल व्यास की माता ही अपितु श्री कृष्ण की माता देवकी भी असुर जाति की थी जब कि उसके पिता वसुदेव आर्य क्षत्रिय थे। श्री कृष्ण की कृष्णता का भी संभवतः यही रहस्य था। श्री कृष्ण में आर्य और असुर रक्त का संमिश्रण था।

महात्मा बुद्ध के विषय में भी कहा जाता है कि उनके रक्त में भी आजकल के गोरखों या पालकी नेवार आदि अन्य जातियों की तरह आर्य और मंगलायड रक्त का संमिश्रण था। शाक्यवंश के बहुत से सामाजिक रीतिरिवाज महात्मा बुद्ध के आर्येतर (किरात) जाति से उद्भव अथवा संबंध की ओर संकेत करते हैं।

आर्येतर जातियों के राजवंशों को आर्य जाति में मिलाने की एक पद्धति जिसमें ब्राह्मणों ने सिद्धहस्तता प्राप्त कर ली थी वह यह थी कि उन्हें क्षत्रिय समझ लिया जाय। यही नीति उन्होंने बाद के आनेवाले आक्रांताओं के विषय में भी अपनाई थी। इसीसे यवनों, शकों और हूण आदियों को हिंदू समाज का अंग बनाया जा सका था।

न केवल उन आर्येतर राजाओं या रजवाड़ों को क्षत्रिय ही मान लिया गया अपितु प्राचीन सूर्य और चंद्रवंश से उनका संबंध जोड़ दिया गया। यह परंपरा हूणों तक ही समाप्त नहीं हुई अपितु बाद में तुर्क और ईरान की कुछ अन्य जातियाँ जब भारत में आईं और उन्होंने हिंदू धर्म स्वीकार कर लिया तो उन्हें भी पूर्ववत् क्षत्रिय स्वीकार कर लिया गया और उनका संबंध अग्नि से जोड़ दिया गया। उन्हें अग्निकुल क्षत्रिय कहा जाने लगा। 1228 ई. में आनेवाले अहोम लोगों को भी जब कि उन्होंने थाईलैंड अथवा श्याम से आकर ब्रह्मपुत्र की घाटी के तिब्बती ब्राह्मण बोडो पर आधिपत्य जमा लिया, क्षत्रिय वर्ण में सम्मिलित कर लिया गया और इंद्रवंश से उनका संबंध जोड़कर उन्हें इंद्रवंशी मान लिया गया। उपर्युक्त वर्णन से यह स्पष्ट है किस प्रकार आर्येतर जातियों को आर्य वर्णाश्रम व्यवस्था में सम्मिलित करने का प्रयत्न आर्यों ने किया था। विदेशी राजवंशों को क्षत्रिय मानकर और पुराने परंपरागत सूर्य और चंद्रवंशों के साथ उनका संबंध जोड़कर उन्होंने बड़ी दूरदर्शिता का परिचय दिया था। नए अग्निकुल की कल्पना भी बहुत सूझ बूझ की थी। इसके लिए पुराणों में परंपरागत सूर्य और चंद्रवंश के राजाओं की सूचियों में भी परिवर्तन आवश्यक था जो कि समय समय पर किया जाता रहा था। इसीलिए पुराणों की वंशावलियों में परस्पर बहुत भेद पाया जाता है।

प्राचीन आर्यों ने न केवल राजवंशों को या विदेशियों की योद्धा जातियों को ही क्षत्रियत्व प्रदान कर अपने में सम्मिलित कर लिया था अपितु उनके पुरोहितों को भी ब्राह्मणत्व प्रदान कर दिया था। ऐसे ब्राह्मणों को वर्ण ब्राह्मण कहा जाता था। क्रमशः ये वर्ण ब्राह्मण दूसरे ब्राह्मणों में घुल मिल गए और इनका पृथक् अस्तित्व न रहा।

भाषा का सम्मिश्रण

भाषा का सम्मिश्रण हुए बिना सांस्कृतिक सम्मिश्रण संभव न था। जब जातियाँ एक दूसरे की भाषा ही न समझें तो सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान कैसे हो सकता है? भाषाओं का आदान प्रदान भारत में प्रागैतिहासिक काल से होता रहा है।

प्रागैतिहासिक काल में सबसे अंत में आनेवाली जाति आर्य जाति थी। वैदिक भाषा विजयी आर्यों की भाषा होने के कारण विजित जातियों द्वारा भी अपना ली जाय इसमें कोई आश्चर्य न था। पर उनकी अपनी भाषाओं के घनिष्ठ संपर्क में आकर भी वह अछूती रह जाए यह संभव न था। परिणाम यह हुआ कि वैदिक आर्यों के आने से पहले जो प्रमुख तीन भाषाएँ भारत में निषाद, किरात और द्रविड़ जातियों द्वारा बोली जाती थीं उनका वैदिक भाषा पर बहुत अधिक प्रभाव पड़ा। ज्यों ज्यों आर्येतर जातियाँ आर्यों की समाजव्यवस्था का अंग बनती गईं अथवा अधिकाधिक आर्य प्रभाव में आती गईं त्यों-त्यों वैदिक भाषा का प्रयोग करनेवाले आर्येतर लोगों की संख्या बढ़ती चली गई। उनकी अपनी भाषा की शब्दावली, वाक्यविन्यास और ध्वनिसमूह वैदिक भाषा को अधिकाधिक प्रभावित करते चले गए। आज के भाषाशास्त्रियों ने

वर्षों की निरंतर साधना के पश्चात् वैदिक अथवा संस्कृत भाषा पर पड़े द्रविड़, आस्ट्रिक एवं मंगलायड प्रभाव को ढूँढ़ निकाला है। जहाँ तक नीग्रायड प्रभाव का संबंध है वह बहुत ही कम है। नीग्रायड जाति स्थायी रूप से भारत में रही नहीं इसलिए उसका प्रभाव भारतीय भाषाओं पर बहुत कम पड़ा। डा. चटर्जी ने कुछेक ऐसे शब्दों का संग्रह किया है जिनके बारे में उनका कहना है कि वे नीग्रायड भाषा के हैं। उनमें से एक है जाति के लिये बंगाली शब्द बादुड जिसका पूर्वरूप संभवतः बात या बाद रहा होगा। प्राचीन बंगाल के अ+ङी प्रत्यय को लगा देने से, इसका रूप ध्वनिपरिवर्तन के कारण बाद में उड़ बन गया इसी से बादुड शब्द बना है।

भारत की आस्ट्रिक भाषाएँ जो कि पूर्व वर्णित आस्ट्रो-एशियाटिक वर्ग की हैं द्रविड़ भाषा से बहुत अधिक भिन्न हैं। उनकी शब्द-रचना में द्रविड़ भाषा से बहुत भेद है। उपसर्ग, प्रत्यय और आगम आस्ट्रिक भाषाओं में लगते हैं द्रविड़ भाषाओं में नहीं। प्रगैतिहासिक काल में आस्ट्रिक-भाषा-भाषी समूचे भारत में फैले हुए थे। कालांतर में ये इतर भाषा-भाषियों से आर्य-भाषा-भाषियों के रूप में परिणत हो गए। कुछ आस्ट्रिक लोग जो पूर्व और मध्यभारत के जंगलों में आरंभ से ही रहने लगे थे या जो बाद में आने वाली जातियों के दबाव के कारण घने जंगलों में बस गए थे वे अपनी भाषा और संस्कृति को आज तक सुरक्षित रखे हुए हैं, ऐसे लोग हैं कोल, भील, संथाल आदि। हिमालय की तराई में रहनेवाले इन आस्ट्रिक लोगों को बाद के मंगलायड लोगों ने आत्मसात् कर दिया। आस्ट्रो-एशियाटिक कोल लोगों की भाषा ने मंगलायड लोगों की भाषा को बहुत अधिक प्रभावित किया जिसके कारण हिमालय की तराई में नेपाल और उसके पश्चिम की ओर के प्रदेश की भाषाएँ सर्वप्रधान बन गईं। इसी धारणा से उन्हें भाषाविज्ञानिकों ने सर्वनामात्मक भाषाओं की पारिभाषिक संज्ञा दी है।

आर्य भाषाओं को आस्ट्रिक (कोल, मुंडा और भोर ख्मीर) भाषाओं की शब्दावली और मुहावरों ने बहुत अधिक प्रभावित किया है। आर्य भाषाओं पर आस्ट्रिक भाषा का प्रभाव आज के भाषा विज्ञान की एक महत्वपूर्ण शाखा है। फ्रांस के प्रसिद्ध विद्वान जीन प्रिजिलुस्की ने आर्य भाषाओं की आस्ट्रिक पृष्ठभूमि के विषय पर बहुत गहरी खोज की है और उसके आधार पर सिद्ध किया है कि हमारे दिन रात के व्यवहार में आनेवाले कार्पास, तांबूल, कदली, कंबल, बाण, लांगल, लकुट आदि प्रचलित शब्दों का उद्भव भी आस्ट्रिक भाषाओं से हुआ है। प्रिजिलुस्की ने जिस खोज का मार्ग दिखाया उसी पर बाद में और भी विद्वान् चले जिनमें प्रमुख हैं एफ. बी. जे. कुईपर जिनकी पुस्तक 'संस्कृत में मुण्डा भाषा से मिलते जुलते शब्द' इस क्षेत्र में प्रामाणिक मानी जाती है। लेखक ने अन्य 70 शब्दों की खोज की है जिनके विषय में उसका कहना है कि इनका उद्भव भी आस्ट्रिक भाषाओं से ही हुआ है।

आधुनिक आर्य भाषाओं में कम से कम दो तो ऐसी अवश्य हैं जिनके विकास को आस्ट्रिक भाषाओं ने बहुत अधिक प्रभावित किया है वे हैं बिहार की मैथिली

और मगही। इन भाषाओं में सर्वनाम क्रियापदों के अंग के रूप में पाए जाते हैं जो कि स्पष्ट ही ऑस्ट्रिक प्रभाव के कारण हैं क्योंकि आर्य और द्रविड़ भाषाओं की शब्दरचना में ऐसा कहीं नहीं पाया जाता।

मंगलायड अथवा किरात जाति भारत में बहुत प्राचैनकाल से रह रही थी। वैदिक आर्यों को उसका परिचय था। यजुर्वेद और अथर्ववेद में उनका उल्लेख पाया जाता है। भारतीय संस्कृति और इतिहास को उन्होंने कितना प्रभावित किया इसका विस्तृत विवचेन डा. सुनीतिकुमार चटर्जी ने अपनी पुस्तक 'किरात जनकृति' में किया है।^१ किरातों के भारत में पूर्व और पूर्वोत्तर भाग में केंद्रित होने के कारण उनका सबसे अधिक प्रभाव हिमालय की तलहटी में, आसाम, पूर्वी और उत्तरी बंगाल और उत्तरी बिहार में पड़ा है। 'आर्य भाषाओं पर किरात प्रभाव, इस विषय पर जो अभी तक सुव्यवस्थित खोज की गई है उससे भी बहुत सी महत्वपूर्ण बातें सामने आई हैं। हिमालय की तलहटी की आर्य भाषाओं में च, ज, छ और झ का त्, द्ज, स और ज के रूप में उच्चारण किरात प्रभाव का ही परिणाम है। पूर्वी भारत और हिमालय की तराई में बहुत से स्थानों के नामों का उद्भव भी संभवतः चीनी-तिब्बती भाषाओं से हुआ है।

द्रविड़ भाषा का प्रभाव

यह पहले ही कहा जा चुका है कि किसी समय द्रविड़ भाषा सारे देश में व्याप्त थी। आर्य जब आए तो इसी भाषा के बोलने वालों से उनका सबसे अधिक संपर्क हुआ। परिणाम यह हुआ कि इस भाषा का उनकी अपनी भाषा पर बहुत अधिक प्रभाव पड़ा। विद्वानों के कथनानुसार गत 3000 वर्षों से आर्यों की भाषा, शब्दावली, ध्वनिसमूह, वाक्यविन्यास एवं शब्दरचना द्रविड़ भाषा के साथ घनिष्ठ संपर्क होने के कारण, उसके अधिकाधिक निकट है। दोनों भाषाओं में अंतर बहुत कम हो गया। द्रविड़ भाषा का आर्य भाषा पर प्रभाव स्पष्ट एवं प्रचुर है।

आर्य भाषा के ध्वनिसमूह में सबसे अधिक महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन था मूर्धन्य ट, ठ, ड, द, ण का अपना लिया जाना। यह द्रविड़ भाषा का ही प्रभाव था। दंत्य त, थ, द, ध, न ल, स, भी द्रविड़ भाषा की ही देन है क्योंकि संभवतः ये ध्वनियाँ हिंद-योरुपीय भाषा में नहीं थीं।

प्रसिद्ध विद्वान जूलस ब्लाक ने अपने एक लेख में लिखा है कि आर्य और द्रविड़ भाषा के ध्वनि समूह के विकास का इतिहास भी लगभग एक सा रहा है। समीकरण का सिद्धांत दोनों में ही लगता है। व्यंजन-समूह आदि में आएँ या मध्य में उनका समीकरण हो जाता है। जैसे द्र, प्र-द, प, कर्क, वक, त्त। किंच स्वर-भक्ति द्रविड़ भाषा की ही विशेषता थी। आर्य भाषाओं—प्राकृत, अपभ्रंश आदि—में भी इसे अपना लिया गया। इन भाषाओं में संस्कृत शब्दों का उच्चारण स्वर-भक्ति के साथ

किया जाता है। इस अंश में द्रविड़ भाषा ने आर्य भाषाओं को प्रभावित किया।

शब्दरचना, वाक्यविन्यास और शब्दावली का जहाँ तक संबंध है वैदिक भाषा और संस्कृत में पर्याप्त भेद है। यह सब भेद द्रविड़ भाषा के प्रभाव के कारण ही हुआ। वैदिक भाषा के उपसर्गों का क्रियापदों के परे और पृथक् भी प्रयोग होता था। आचार्य पाणिनि ने भी कहा है 'ते प्राग्धातोः छंदसि परेऽपि व्यवहिताश्च'। संस्कृत में इन उपसर्गों का धातु से अव्यवहित पूर्व प्रयोग करने का नियम हो गया। वैदिक काल में प्र आदि उपसर्गों को भी निपात ही कहा जाता था कालांतर में इन्हें उपसर्ग की पृथक् संज्ञा दी गई। धातुमुप समीपे सृष्टा इति उपसर्गाः—धातु के साथ लगे रहनेवाले, चिपके रहनेवाले। समय बीतता गया और वे उपसर्ग धातु के साथ इतना अधिक चिपकते चले गए कि अपनी पृथक् सत्ता ही खो बैठे। आधुनिक आर्य भाषाओं में ऐसा ही पाया जाता है। उदाहरण स्वरूप संस्कृत उपविष्ट, बंगला पैस, ब्रज—हिंदी बैठ, संस्कृत उद्(त्) + तरति — हिंदी उतरे, संस्कृत सम्अर्प — हिंदी सौंप, संस्कृत वि+क्री—हिंदी बिक(ना), संस्कृत अभि+अञ्ज, हिंदी भीज आदि।

संस्कृत में कारकों को बताने के लिए जो विभक्तियाँ लगती थीं कालांतर में ध्वनिपरिवर्तन के कारण वे शब्दों का ही अंग बन गई और बाद में कारकों को छोटित करने का एक और उपाय ढूँढ़ निकाला गया और वह था सहायक शब्दों का जोड़ना। वर्तमान आर्य भाषाओं तक पहुँचते पहुँचते ये सहायक शब्द विभक्तियों के रूप में परिणत हो गए। दृष्टान्त के रूप में हिंदी की विभक्तियाँ का, के, की, को, के लिए आदि में स्वतंत्र शब्द ही थे जो कि अब विभक्ति के रूप में प्रयुक्त होने लगे हैं। संस्कृत में भी यह प्रवृत्ति पाई जाती है। वस्तुनि न कहकर वस्तुजातम् कह दिया जाता है।

किंच, अतिशय और प्रकर्ष दिखाने के लिये जो संस्कृत में तर, तम या ईयस्, इष्ट लगाने की प्रवृत्ति थी उसके स्थान पर स्वतंत्र शब्दों का प्रयोग कर काम चला लिया जाता है। संस्कृत में कहा जायगा सुंदरतर, सुंदरतम, हिंदी में उससे सुंदर और सबसे सुंदर कहना ही पर्याप्त होगा।

क्रियापदों के स्थान पर क्त-कृतवत्त्वतः प्रयोगों की भरमार भी प्राकृतों और वर्तमान आर्य भाषाओं में दिखाई देती है। स अगमत्, अगच्छत् या जगाम के स्थान पर प्राकृत में संस्कृत के स गतः का रूपांतर स गतो, गदो या गओ पाया जाता है। लोट लकार के उत्तम पुरुष में कर्ता के साथ अस्मि लगाकर कर्तास्मि के प्रयोग की पद्धति भी द्रविड़ भाषा के प्रभाव के कारण ही चली होगी।

एक क्रियापद के साथ दूसरा क्रियापद लगाकर अर्थ पूरा करने की जो प्रवृत्ति आधुनिक आर्य भाषाओं में देखी जाती है वह भी द्रविड़ प्रभाव के कारण चली होगी। संस्कृत उपविष्ट—हिंदी बैठ जाना, बंगला बसिवा पाड़ा। द्रविड़ भाषाओं में तमिल 'कोल्लु'

लेना आना पो जाना, आदि एवं तेलुगू के कोनु, खरीदना या लेना, इक्नु देना आदि धातुरूपों का अन्य धातुओं के साथ मिला कर प्रयोग किया जाता है।

द्रविड़ भाषा का एक और सिद्धांत जो प्राकृतों एवं वर्तमान भाषाओं में घर कर गया है वह है कृदंत नाम पद के साथ कृ धातु के रूपों का प्रयोग करने की आदत जैसे जिज्ञासा करना भोजन करना, आदि।¹ तमिल भाषा में भी करने के लिए ऋ चेदम् धातु का नामपदों के साथ प्रयोग किया जाता है जैसे मुत्तञ्चेदं - चुंबन किया, पावन्न चेदं - पाप किया आदि। वाक्य-विन्यास की दृष्टि से द्रविड़ भाषाओं का आर्य भाषाओं पर प्रभाव का तो कहना ही क्या। वाक्य को वैसा का वैसा ही रहने दीजिए। केवल शब्द बदल दीजिए तो वही वाक्य हिंदी वाक्य से तमिल या तेलुगू वाक्य बन जायगा।

द्रविड़ भाषाओं ने आर्य भाषा को इतने अधिक शब्द प्रदान किए हैं उनका परिगणन करना प्रयत्न करने पर भी संभव न होगा। प्रसिद्ध पाश्चात्य विद्वान् काल्डवेल, किट्टल और बुरो आदि ने अपने ग्रंथों में इस विषय पर पर्याप्त प्रकाश डाला है। उनसे द्रविड़ भाषाओं के आर्य भाषा पर पड़े प्रभाव का पता लगाया जा सकता है।

सांस्कृतिक सम्मिश्रण

भारत में आनेवाले आर्यों की वेशभूषा एवं रहन सहन के ढंग में द्रविड़ एवं अन्य जातियों के संपर्क से भारी परिवर्तन हुआ। ग्रामों तथा जंगलों में रहनेवाले आर्यों ने पूर्ववर्ती जातियों के संसर्ग से नगरों को बसाने की ओर भी ध्यान दिया। खान-पान में मांस और मदिरा का प्रयोग कम हो गया। कालांतर में वह यज्ञ यागादि तक ही सीमित कर दिया गया। महात्मा बुद्ध और महावीर स्वामी ने अहिंसा के सिद्धांत पर बल दिया। पशुबलि के विरुद्ध उन्होंने प्रचार किया। उनका भारत के रंगमंच पर प्रकट होना और आर्यों की कतिपय मान्यताओं पर गहरा प्रहार करना भारत के इतिहास में आकस्मिक घटनाएँ नहीं थीं। इनके पीछे अनेक जातियों के विद्रोह की भावना छिपी थी। यह बौद्ध और जैन धर्म का प्रभाव है कि कुलीन ब्राह्मण घरानों ने भी मांस का सर्वथा परित्याग कर दिया। आर्यों में गिनने के लिए दशकों का उपयोग किया जाता था। गिनने के लिए हाथ की दस उँगलियाँ काम में लाई जाती थीं। अस्ट्रिक लोगों में बीस से गिनने की प्रथा थी। उत्तर भारत में यह प्रथा अब भी कोड़ियों से गिनने के रूप में प्रचलित है। कोड़ी शब्द मूल रूप से कोल भाषा का शब्द है। बीसियों से गिनने का भी रिवाज है जैसे पाँच बीसी, सात बीसी। द्रविड़ लोगों में आठ से गिनने का रिवाज था। आर्यों ने आठ से गिनने की विधि को और आठ के भागों उपभागों जैसे चार, आठ, सोलह, चौसठ से हिसाब लगाने की प्रक्रिया को अपना लिया। आर्यों की विधि थी दस से गिनने की और द्रविड़ लोगों की आठ से गिनने की। दोनों ही आर्यों को स्वीकार्य थीं। यही कारण था कि 10 और 8 जो कि कालांतर में 108 लिखे

जाने लगे भारत में बहुत अधिक प्रिय हो गए। गिनती का प्रारंभ इनसे होने के कारण इन्हें बहुत महत्व दिया जाने लगा। अनेक पूजनीय साधु संतों के नाम से पूर्व 108 लिखना मांगलिक और गौरव को द्योतित करने वाला समझा जाने लगा। 10 और 8 के योग से बनी 18 संख्या भी भारत में खूब चली 18 पर्व, 18 पुराण, 18 उपपुराण, 18 अध्याय इन सबकी यही पृष्ठ भूमि थी।

भारत में परंपरा को निगम और आगम दो भागों में विभक्त किया जाता है। निगम वह परंपरा है जो आर्यों की अपनी थी। आगम वह थी जो उन्होंने अपनाई थी। आर्य और आर्येतर जातियों के संमिश्रण के लिये आवश्यक ही था कि आगम और निगम परस्पर मिल जाएँ। इस आगम और निगम के संमिश्रण ने ही भारतीय संस्कृति को जन्म दिया था। इसका ही यह परिणाम हुआ था कि आर्यों के देवताओं अग्नि, इंद्र, वरुण आदि जो कि प्रकृति के विभिन्न रूप ही थे, के साथ आर्येतर जातियों के देवी देवताओं शिव, विष्णु, उमा और श्री को भी सुधर्मा में एक साथ ही स्थान मिला था।

होम और पूजा भी दो विभिन्न विचारधाराओं का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं। पूजा या पुष्प-कर्म आर्यों के धार्मिक जीवन का अंग नहीं था। आर्यों के देवताओं की संख्या तैत्तिरीय थी। यह सब प्रायः प्रकृति की ही विभिन्न शक्तियाँ थी, जिन्हें आर्यों ने देवता मान रखा था। उन्हें प्रसन्न करने के लिए वे यज्ञ अथवा होम किया करते थे। वेदि पर अग्नि प्रज्वलित कर उसमें घृत डालकर वे मंत्रोच्चारण किया करते थे। ऐसा विश्वास था कि घृत अथवा अन्य सामग्री की गंध से देवता प्रसन्न हो जाते हैं। होम की यह प्रथा आर्यों की अन्य शाखाओं में भी प्रचलित थी। घृत अथवा अन्य सामग्री होम का प्रधान अंग होने के कारण जर्मन भाषा में परमात्मावाचक 'गोड' शब्द का अर्थ आदि में घृत और हवन सामग्री ही था।⁶ देवताओं के प्रति आर्यों की जो भावना थी उसमें भी मित्रता का सा पुट मिला हुआ था। उन्हें अपने देवी देवताओं पर विश्वास था कि वे उनकी सहायता करेंगे क्योंकि उनकी धारणा थी 'ददामि उत ददासि' - मैं तुम्हें देता हूँ इसलिए तुम भी मुझे दोगे।

पूजा कर्म आर्यों के होम से बहुत भिन्न है। भक्त के लिए सारा संसार उसका इष्ट देव ही है। वह सक्रिय होकर देवता की स्तुति करता है। उससे व्यक्तिगत संबंध स्थापित करना चाहता है। मूर्ति के रूप में वह उसकी प्रतिष्ठा करता है। सुंदर से सुंदर वस्त्र उसे पहनाता है। भोजन करने से पहले उसे निवेदन करता है, अर्पित करता है और उसकी अनुमति से खाता है। पुष्प, धूप, दीप, नैवेद्य से देवता की आरती उतारता है। चंदन लगाता है।⁷ नृत्य और गान के द्वारा उसका मनोरंजन करता है और रात को जब वह सोता है तो उसका देवता भी शयन करता है।

पूजा कर्म में पुष्पों का होना अनिवार्य है नहीं तो पूजा हो ही नहीं सकती। इसीलिये तो इसे पुष्प-कर्म कहते हैं। वैदिक आर्यों के होम में द्विजातियों का ही

अधिकार था। पूजा का मार्ग सबके लिए खुला था। आर्य ही नहीं आर्येतर जातियाँ भी पुष्प कर्म के द्वारा देवताओं का अर्चन-पूजन कर सकती थीं। पूजा में पुष्पों की इस प्रधानता के कारण ही मार्क कोलिस नाम के विद्वान् ने संस्कृत के पूजा शब्द को द्रविड़ भाषा का शब्द सिद्ध किया है।^१ पू का अर्थ है पुष्प, च या ज का अर्थ है करना। पुष्प करना अथवा पुष्पकर्म। वैदिक काल के उपरान्त होम की ओर जनता की प्रवृत्ति हटती सी दिखाई देती है। पूजा विधि की लोकप्रियता बढ़ती चली जाती है। महाभारत और पुराणों के काल में भी देवी देवताओं की पूजा की लगभग वही विधि थी जो आजकल पाई जाती है।

हिंदुओं के बहुत से देवी देवता विष्णु, शिव, श्री, उमा, गणेश, हनुमान्, आदि भी आदिम द्रविड़ जाति के ही देवी देवता थे जो आर्यों ने अपना लिए। पुराने तमिल भाषा में यह शब्द क्विन् रहा होगा। द्रविड़ों का एक देवता है विष्णु जो कि आकाश का देवता है। इसका वर्णन विष्णु के वर्णन से मिलता जुलता है। हनुमान् भी प्रारंभ में द्रविड़ देवता ही था। पार्जिस्टर के अनुसार द्रविड़ भाषा में इसका नाम अणमति था जिसका अर्थ था पुवानर।

वैदिक भाषा में इसी अर्थ के लिए वृषाकपि शब्द का प्रयोग किया गया। पौराणिक युग में द्रविड़ भाषा के अणमति शब्द को ही संस्कृत रूप में परिवर्तित कर हनुमान् के रूप में अपना लिया गया।

भारतीय विचारधारा में योग को बहुत ऊँचा स्थान दिया गया है। योगभ्यास करने की प्रवृत्ति आर्यों से पूर्ववर्ती है। मोहेंजोदारो और हड़प्पा के भग्नावशेषों में पाई गई मुद्रांकित मूर्ति से भी यही पता चलता है। इस मूर्ति में एक देवता त्रिशूल हाथ में लिए पशुओं से घिरा हुआ ध्यानमुद्रा में चित्रित है। संभवतः यह चित्र योगीश्वर त्रिशूली, पशुपति, विरूपाक्ष शिव का ही है।

आर्यों की बहुत सी मान्यताएँ जैसे पुनर्जन्म आदि आर्येतर जातियों की ही हैं यह पहले ही कहा जा चुका है। नासदीय सूक्त में जिस सृष्टिसंबंधी दार्शनिक तत्व का विवेचन किया गया है उसकी पृष्ठ भूमि में भी द्रविड़ और आस्ट्रिक प्रभाव स्पष्ट है।

जातियाँ और संस्कृतियाँ किसी एक धारा में नहीं बहतीं। उनकी अनेक शाखाएँ उपशाखाएँ होती हैं, जो समानांतर चलते-चलते बहुत बार परस्पर घुलमिल जाती हैं। जातीय और सांस्कृतिक समिश्रण का यही रहस्य है। भारतभूमि में यह सांस्कृतिक समिश्रण प्रागैतिहासिक काल से ही प्रारंभ हो गया था। इस समिश्रण ने ही भारत को भारतीयता प्रदान की है।

सन्दर्भ

1. 'द काइंड आव मिससेजिनेशन, दुगेदर विथ द ऐडमिशन इन दू इंडिया आव वेरियस अदर टाइप्स आव कल्चर ऐंड रिलिजस आउटलुक हैज परहैप्स मेड द एवरेज इंडियन मोर कास्मोपोलिटन इन इट्स फिजिकल ऐड मॅटल कम्पोजीशन दैन ए रिप्रेजेंटेटिव आफ् एनी अदर नेशन।' 'प्रासीडिंग्स आफ् आल इंडिया ओरियंटल कानफरेंस, अहमदाबाद, 1956। प्रेसिडेंशल एड्रेस डिलिवर्ड बाइ डा. सुनीतिकुमार चटर्जी।
2. उर्गु (ब्राह्मण, क्षत्रिय या वैश्य पिता + शूद्र माता) दास, निषाद (ब्राह्मण पिता + शूद्र माता), दौष्यंत, म्लेच्छ, गोपाल (क्षत्रिय पिता + शूद्र माता), करण, रथकार, कटकार, सूचक, आयोगव (वैश्य पिता + शूद्र माता अथवा शूद्र पिता + वैश्य माता) तक्षन् (वैश्य पिता + शूद्र माता) चांडाल, शूलिक (शूद्र पिता + ब्राह्मण माता) इत्यादि।
3. 'प्रोटो-मुंडा वर्ड्स इन संस्कृत,' एम्स्टर्डम, 1948, पृ. 178।
4. किरात अनकृति दि इंडो-मंगलोयाइस एंड देयर कंट्रीब्यूशन टु द हिस्ट्री एंड कल्चर आफ् इंडिया, एशियाटिक सोसायटी आफ् बंगाल, कलकत्ता, 1981, पृ. 94 तथा परवर्ती। 6 (64-1)
5. अंग्रेजी में भी ऐसे प्रयोग पाए जाते हैं। संस्कृत-सद्-अंग्रेजी सिद्।
6. हिंद यूरोपीय भाषा में धृतोम्, संस्कृत में हुतम्।
7. देवता को लाल चंदन लगाया जाता है। संभवतः यह उस समय की ओर संकेत करता है जब पशुबलि दी जाती थी। उस समय मूर्ति पर रक्त से लेप किया जाता था। बाद में रक्त के स्थान पर चंदन या सिंदूर लगाने की प्रथा चल पड़ी।
8. कार्ल शापेटियर ने पूजा शब्द का उद्भव एक अन्य द्रविड़ धातु पसु या पुसु से माना है जिसका अर्थ है लेप करना (चंदन या सिंदूर से)। इस विद्वान् के मत में रक्त या सिंदूर से लेप ही पूजाविधि का प्रधान अंग रहा है।

✓ वाल्मीकिरामायणस्य कस्मिन्नापि पाठे
नोपलभ्यते । आनन्दसु अनुसन्धेयः ।

VIII

संस्कृत वाङ्मय में राष्ट्रीय भावना

अपने राष्ट्र के प्रति प्रेम हर व्यक्ति में सहज और स्वाभाविक है। जिस घरती पर उसने जन्म लिया है, जहां की मिट्टी में वह खेला है, पला और बढ़ा है वह उसे अपनी ओर खींचती है। वहां की जलवायु, पेड़-पौधे, नदियां-सरोवर, खेत-खलिहान, गांव-देहात, खान-पान, रीति-रिवाज, परम्पराएं और आस्थाएं, अपने-पराये सभी उसे अपनी ओर खींचते हैं क्योंकि वे उसके अस्तित्व के अभिन्न अङ्ग हैं। विदेशों में बस जाने पर भी, वहां नया घर बसा लेने पर भी उसे उन सबकी याद रह-रह कर आती है जो कभी उसके जीवन के अभिन्न अङ्ग थे। उसका राष्ट्रप्रेम उसे अपनी घरती से जोड़े रखता है। शरीर उसका अन्यत्र होने पर भी मन उसका वहीं रमता है।

रावण का संहार करने के बाद जब श्री राम ने विभीषण को लङ्का का राजा बनाने का प्रस्ताव रखा तो उसने उनसे कहा कि वे ही वहां का शासन-तन्त्र अपने हाथ में ले लें। वह उनका अनुचर बन कर उनकी सेवा करता रहेगा। इस पर श्री राम ने लक्ष्मण की ओर देखा और उन शब्दों में अपने मनोभाव व्यक्त किये जो आज जन्मभूमि के प्रति आसक्ति के अप्रतिम प्रतीक बन गये हैं। उन्होंने कहा—

✓ अपि स्वर्णमयी लङ्का न मे लक्ष्मण! रोचते।
जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी॥

हे लक्ष्मण लङ्का सोने की होने पर भी मुझे अच्छी नहीं लगती, मेरी रुचि उसमें नहीं है। जननी (माता) और जन्मभूमि, माता और मातृभूमि, स्वर्ग से भी बढ़ कर होती हैं।

यह एक उदाहरण है संस्कृत वाङ्मय में राष्ट्रप्रेम का। यह वाङ्मय इस प्रकार के उदाहरणों से भरा पड़ा है वहां राष्ट्रप्रेम का स्वर सर्वत्र मुखरित हुआ है।

प्राचीनता संस्कृत वाङ्मय की एक विशेषता है। इसका इतिहास इसे सहस्रों वर्ष पूर्व तक ले जाता है जिनमें अनेक कालखण्ड समाहित हैं—वैदिक काल, रामायण-महाभारत काल, पुराण काल, लौकिक संस्कृत वाङ्मय काल, आधुनिक संस्कृत

वाङ्मय काल आदि। इन सब काल खण्डों में अपार वाङ्मय की सृष्टि हुई है। लाखों ग्रन्थों की रचना हुई है। सहस्रों लुप्त हो गये पर सौभाग्य से सहस्रों बच भी रहे हैं। उनपर दृष्टिपात करने पर भारतवासियों के राष्ट्र प्रेम का एक चित्र उभरता है। उसी चित्र को दर्शाने का प्रस्तुत आलेख एक विनम्र प्रयास है।

चूँकि संस्कृत वाङ्मय में प्राचीनतम वेद ही हैं अतः वहीं से प्रारम्भ करना उचित होगा। अपनी भूमि, अपनी जन्मस्थली, को मातृभूमि कहा जाता है। यह इसलिए भी कि जिस तरह माता स्नेह देती है, पालन-पोषण करती है उसी तरह अपनी धरती में मातृभाव का दर्शन हमें वेदों से ही होने लगता है। ऋग्वेद ने इसे माता रूप में सम्बोधित किया है—माता पृथिवी महीयम्^१। माता पृथिवी मुझ में दुर्बुद्धि न लाये—मा नो माता पृथिवी दुर्मता धातु^२। अथर्ववेद में भी यही भावना है। वहाँ मनुष्य अपने को पृथिवी का पुत्र कह रहा है—माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः^३। क्योंकि धरती हमारी माता है इसलिये पुत्र का उसके प्रति लगाव स्वाभाविक है। वह इसे सुखकारिणी (मयोभुवः)^४, सुखदायिनी, अभयदायिनी, कल्याणकारिणी, आनन्ददायिनी, अन्न-जल, घी-दूध से परिपूर्ण, स्योना, अनुक्षरा, निवेशनी, शिवा, सुखदा, ऊर्जस्वती, पयस्वती^५ कहता है।

वैदिक ऋषियों के लिए मातृभूमि ही सर्वस्व है। क्योंकि यह उनकी कल्याणकारिणी माता है, योगक्षेम कारिणी है, भोजन दायिनी है। उनकी मान्यता है कि जिस प्रकार सुदृढ़ एवं सुरक्षित नाव पर सवार होकर लोग समुद्र पार कर लेते हैं उसी प्रकार सर्वसुखसम्पन्न मातृभूमि में रहकर वे अपनी जीवन सरिता को पार कर जायेंगे। मातृभूमि उनका त्रिविध कल्याण करेगी—सा नः शर्म त्रिवरूथं नि यच्छातु^६।

यह तक सुखद तथ्य है कि वेदों में राष्ट्र की परिकल्पना प्रादुर्भूत हो चुकी थी। विभिन्न यज्ञों को करते समय ऋषिजन राष्ट्र के मङ्गल की कामना किया करते थे। उनकी प्रार्थना रहती थी कि उनके राष्ट्र में ब्राह्मण ज्ञान सम्पन्न हों, राष्ट्ररक्षक क्षत्रिय शूरवीर, शस्त्रास्त्र-कला कुशल, शत्रुनाशक तथा महारथी हों—गायें भरपूर दूध देने वाली हों, बैल सुपुष्ट हों, अश्व द्रुतगामी हों, स्त्रियाँ सर्वगुणसम्पन्न हों, रथी योद्धाओं में विजय-कामना बलवती हो, युवक निर्भीक एवं सुशील हों, मेघ यथापेक्षित पानी बरसायें, वनस्पतियाँ फलें-फूलें, अभीष्ट वस्तुओं की प्राप्ति होती रहे और वे प्राप्त वस्तुएं सुरक्षित बनी रहें —

आब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम् आ राष्ट्रे राजन्यः

शूर इषव्याऽतिव्याधी महारथो जायताम्

दोग्ध्री धेनुर्वोढाऽनड्वानाशु सप्तिः पुरन्धिर्योषा जिष्णू रथेष्ठाः

सभेयो युवा अस्य यजमानस्य वीरो जायताम्।

निकामे निकामे नः पजन्यो वर्षतु।

फलवत्यो न ओषधयः पच्यन्ता योगक्षेमा नः कल्पताम्।

हर स्थिति में राष्ट्र वैदिक ऋषियों के ध्यान में रहता था। वर-वधू को आशीर्वाद देते हुए भी राष्ट्र की समृद्धि करते हुए ही अपनी समृद्धि करने का उन्होंने उपदेश दिया—

अभिवर्धतां पयसाभि राष्ट्रेण वर्धताम्।
रय्या सहस्रवर्चसेमौ स्तामनुपेक्षितौ॥⁹

जब राष्ट्र की परिकल्पना कर ली गई तो उसके लिए यह भी आवश्यक है कि उसकी एकता और अखण्डता भी बनी रहे। उसके लिए अपेक्षित है राष्ट्रवासियों में परस्पर सौहार्द और सौमनस्य। वैदिक ऋषि ने इसके लिए भी प्रार्थना की है—

संगच्छध्वं स वदध्वं स वो मनासि जानताम्

.....

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम्
समानं मन्त्रमभिमन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि।

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथावः सुसहासति॥¹⁰

एक दूसरे से मिलकर चलें, मिलकर बोलें, मिल जुलकर ज्ञान प्राप्त करें, परस्पर सम्पर्क में रहें, सौमनस्य बनायें, मिल जुलकर मन्त्रणा करें, समितियों में समान अधिकार समझें, उद्देश्य में हार्दिक समानता रखें, सब साथ-साथ काम करें।

किञ्च, लोग अपनी सुविधा और अभ्यास के अनुसार जिस भाषा में वार्तालाप करना चाहें करें, अपनी इच्छानुसार जिस धर्म (ईश्वर) की उपासना करना चाहें करें किन्तु अपने राष्ट्र को उन्हें अपने गृह के समान समझना चाहिए और मिलजुल कर उसकी देखभाल करनी चाहिए। क्योंकि तभी राष्ट्र ऐश्वर्य सम्पन्न हो सकेगा—

जनं बिभ्रति बहुधा विवाचसं नाना धर्माणं पृथिवी यथाैकसम्।
सहस्रं धारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहां ध्रुवं घनुरपस्फुरन्ती॥¹¹

वैदिक काल से पुराण काल पर आने पर इस राष्ट्रभक्ति का स्वर अधिक मुखर हुआ है। वहां तो भारतभूमि के विषय में यहां तक कहा गया है कि देवता तक ये गीत गाते हैं कि वे जन जिन्होंने भारतभूमि में जन्म लिया है जोकि स्वर्ग और अपवर्ग (मोक्ष) दोनों को देने वाली है, धन्य हैं—

गायन्ति देवाः किल गीतकानि
धन्यास्तु ये भारतभूमिभागे।
स्वर्गापिवर्गास्पदमार्गभूते
भवन्ति भूयः पुरुषाः सुरत्वात्॥¹²

वहां के अनुसार भारतभूमि का विस्तार नौ सहस्र योजन (एक योजन चार कोस का होता है, अंग्रेजी पैमाने के अनुसार आठ या नौ मील) का है। यह समुद्र के उत्तर की ओर तथा हिमालय से दक्षिण की ओर है। इसकी सन्तान भारती कहलाती है। जिन्हें स्वर्ग और अपवर्ग (मोक्ष), की इच्छा है उनकी यह कर्मभूमि है। वहां भारत वर्ष नाम से इस देश का उल्लेख है—

उत्तरेण समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणो।
वर्षं तद् भारतं नाम भारती यत्र सन्ततिः॥
नवयोजनसाहस्रो विस्तारश्च द्विजोत्तमाः।
कर्मभूमिरियं स्वर्गमपवर्गं च इच्छताम्॥¹³

भारत का वर्णन करते हुए पुराणकार भावुक हो उठता है, वह शब्दों द्वारा इसका मानचित्र प्रस्तुत कर इसकी महिमा का वर्णन करने का प्रयास करता है। पर वह इतनी अधिक है कि उसे कहना पड़ जाता है कि वह वाणी की पहुंच से बाहर है—

एवं तु भारतं वर्षं नवसंस्थानसंस्थितम्
दक्षिणे परतो यस्य पूर्वं चैव महोदधिः॥
हिमवानुत्तरेणास्य कार्मुकस्य यथा गुणः।
तदेतद् भारतं वर्षं सर्वबीजं द्विजोत्तमाः॥¹⁴

इस देश की दक्षिण और पूर्व दिशाओं में सागर है और उत्तर में हिमालय (पश्चिम से पूर्व तक) धनुष की प्रत्यङ्गा की भांति विराज रहा है। इस देश में सब प्रकार के पदार्थ उपलब्ध हैं। भूमण्डल में भारत के समान और कोई देश नहीं है—

न भारतसमं वर्षं पृथिव्यामस्ति भो द्विजाः॥¹⁵

वे नरश्रेष्ठ धन्य हैं जो भारत में जन्म लेते हैं। उन्हें धर्म, अर्थ, काम और मोक्ष सभी का फल उपलब्ध रहता है—

धन्यास्ते भारते वर्षे जायन्ते ये नरोत्तमाः।
धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां प्राप्नुवन्ति महाफलम्॥¹⁶

यह वह देश है, जहां प्रसन्न मन से देवता भी जन्म लेना चाहते हैं—

यत्र देवाः सदा हृष्टा जन्म वाञ्छन्ति शोभनम्॥¹⁷

इसके सभी गुणों का वर्णन कौन कर सकता है—

कः शक्नोति गुणान् वक्तुं भारतस्याखिलान् द्विजाः॥

पुराणों ने अपने देश की अखण्डता को सौभाग्य माना है और देश भंग को दुर्भाग्य। कुल के विनाश को, पर पुरुष में आसक्त पत्नी को और दुर्व्यसनी पुत्र को

एवं श्रुत्यनुगृहीतायां युक्त्युपोद्बलितायां ब्रह्मण उपादानकारणतायां स्थितायामित्थं प्रत्यवतिष्ठन्ते वादिनः—यद्येवमुपादानताऽभ्युपेयेत तदा यथा पटे कार्ये समुत्पन्ने तत्कारणानां तन्तूनां पृथक् सत्ता नोपलभ्यते यथा वा घटे जाते तत्कारणभूताया मृदः पृथग्भावो नास्ति, एवं जगति जाते ब्रह्म पृथङ् नावशिष्येतेति। तान् प्रति ब्रूमो न वयं केवलोपादानत्व-मातिष्ठामहे येनायं दोषः प्रादुःष्यात्, किन्तुर्ह्यभिन्ननिमित्तोपादानत्वमिति।

यद्यपि श्रुतिषु क्वचिदप्ययं प्रपञ्चो ब्रह्मणो विवर्त इति नोक्तं तथापि निरवयवस्य सतो ब्रह्मण उपादानत्वे परिणामासंभवात् पारिशेष्याद्विवर्त एवास्थेयो भवति। विवर्त-समाश्रयेणैव श्रुत्युक्तमुपादानत्वं शक्यमुपपादयितुम्। विवर्तत्वात्ताविकव्यन्यथाप्रथेति लक्षितः। यथा वा वेदान्तपरिभाषाकारैर्निरूपितम्—विवर्तो नाम उपादानविषमसत्ताककार्योत्पत्तिरिति। इदं दृश्यमानं नानानामरूपात्मकं विश्वं ब्रह्मणो विवर्त इति कृतान्तः। अयं च विवर्तोऽविद्याकृतो भवति। केयमविद्या नाम। अविद्या हि सदसद्भ्यामनिर्वचनीयं त्रिगुणात्मकं ज्ञानविरोधि भावरूपं यत्किञ्चिदिति वदन्ति। सेयमविद्या विक्षेपावरणशक्ति-द्वयान्विता ब्रह्माऽऽवृणोति, आवृत्य च विक्षिपति प्रतिभासयति सकलमिमं प्रपञ्चम्। इयं चानादिरपि सान्ता, कालान्तरे बाध्यमानत्वात्। ननु सत्यामविद्यायां जीवः समुद्भवति, सति च जीवेऽविद्या समुल्लसतीतीतरेतराश्रयताप्रसङ्गः। न ह्यविद्या पश्चात्तनस्वकार्यवृत्तिः स्यादिति युज्यत इति चेत् केयं बिभीषिका। अनादिरयमविद्याया जीवस्य चान्योन्यसमाश्रयः। कालानवच्छिन्नं ह्येतयोः साहचर्यमिति गृहणम्।

नन्वेवविधोऽन्योन्याश्रयसंबन्धो न बुद्धिमुपारोहतीति चेत्, सत्यम्। इदं ह्यविद्याया अविद्यात्वं यद् दुरवधारत्वम्। अनिर्वाच्या चाविद्या बुद्धिविषयश्चेति विप्रतिषिद्धम्। तदुक्तम्—

दुर्घटत्वमविद्याया भूषणं न तु दूषणम्।

कथञ्चिद् घटमानत्वेऽविद्यात्वं दुर्घटं भवेत्॥ इति।

जगतो व्याख्यात्रीयमविद्या स्वयमव्याख्येयेति स्थितम्। अयं दृश्यमानः प्रपञ्चः सुतुच्छक इति परेऽपि प्रस्थानभेदाः स्वीकुर्वते। तथा चोक्तं सांख्यवृद्धैः पातञ्जले भाष्ये चतुर्थे चरणे—

गुणानां परमं रूपं न दृष्टिपथमृच्छति।

यत्तु दृष्टिपथं प्राप्तं तन्मायैव सुतुच्छकम् ॥ [4.13] इति।

एतदभिप्रेत्यैव भगवता गौतमेनापि सूत्रितम्—“स्वप्नविषयाभिमानवदयं प्रमाण-प्रमेयाभिमानः” [4/2/32] इति, “मायागन्धर्वनगरमृगतृष्णिकावद्वा” [4/2/32] छ इति चेति जितमद्वैतवादिभिः।

महन्नामोपकृतं लोकस्याद्वैतवादेनेति प्रसङ्गादुच्यते। शास्त्रेण यत्र तत्रोपदिष्ट आत्मौपम्यदर्शने तदाश्रिते च व्यवहारे तत् उपपद्यत एव यथाहमात्मनि वर्ते तथा परेषु परत्वेनाभासमानेष्वपि वर्तयेति। वास्तवे नानात्वे सादृश्यबुद्धिरुपदिष्टा मृषा स्यात् तन्निबन्धन् व्यवहारो न हितः स्यात्। ऐकात्म्यमिदं सर्वम्, नेह नानास्ति किञ्चनेति च वेदान्तराद्धान्तः।

एक एव न आत्मा। नानात्वं तु देहनिबन्धनम्। देहा भिद्यन्ते न देही। आभणति लोकः—यः परः स द्वेष्यो भवतीति। अहमन्यमाहन्यामित्युद्यन्नेव विलीयते भावः। कथङ्कार-मात्मानमाघ्नीय। कथमहमन्यस्मिन् व्यलीकं कुर्याम्। अलीकं तदन्यत्वं वास्तवं चैकत्वम्। न जातुचित्कुतश्चिद् बिभीयाम्। परस्माद्धि भयं भवति। मम च परो नास्ति। सर्वो देही ममात्मनोऽव्यतिरिक्त इति। एवं दृढभूमिं गते सर्वात्मताविश्वासे सर्वसत्त्वानामहिंसनी-यताऽर्थादापद्यते। न खलु कश्चनार्यः क्षोदिष्ठमपि जन्तुं हन्तुमीष्टे। एकात्मत्वं हि वारयति। एवं चाहिंसा परमो धर्म इति फलितम्। आचर्यमाण एष धर्मः सर्वत्र भुवि भावुकं भावयेत्कलिं विकलयेच्छमं च प्रतिष्ठापयेत्।

XV

गीता में आत्मा का अमरत्व

गीता में आत्मा के अमरत्व की चर्चा जिस प्रकरण में आती है उसे समझे बिना इसे समझना कठिन है। कौरवों और पाण्डवों की सेनाएं जब एक दूसरे के सामने लड़ने को तैयार खड़ी थीं, तब अर्जुन ने श्री कृष्ण से कहा कि आप मेरा रथ उन दोनों सेनाओं के बीच ले जायें—*सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत*¹—जिससे कि मैं देख सकूँ कि इस युद्ध में मुझे किन से लड़ना है—*कर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन् रणसमुद्यमे*² अर्जुन के कहने के अनुसार श्री कृष्ण रथ को दोनों सेनाओं के बीच ला खड़ा करते हैं। अर्जुन तब देखते हैं अपने सामने अपने बन्धु-बान्धवों और गुरुजनों को। उनका पसीना छूटने लगता है। शरीर का अङ्ग अङ्ग सिहर उठता है, मुँह सूखने लगता है, शरीर कांप उठता है, रोमांच हो आता है। गाण्डीव हाथ से छूटने लगता है। त्वचा जलने लगती है। सिर चक्कर खाने लगता है। वे सोचते हैं कि इन सब अपने लोगों को मार कर राज्य मिला भी तो क्या। इनके रक्त से सने भोगों को मैं भोगूँ क्या? नहीं मुझसे युद्ध नहीं हो पायेगा। भीष्म और द्रोण जैसे पूजनीय महापुरुषों के वार का जवाब मैं बाण चला कर कैसे दे पाऊंगा। न भई न। मुझसे युद्ध नहीं होने का। यह कह कर वह रथ के पिछले भाग पर बैठ जाता है—*रथोपस्थ उपाविशत्*³ तब श्री कृष्ण उसे समझाते हैं कि क्यों उसे विषम परिस्थिति में विषाद ने आ घेरा है—*कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम्*⁴ आर्यों ने तो कभी ऐसा किया नहीं—*अनार्यजुष्टम्*। स्वर्ग इससे मिलता नहीं *अस्वर्ग्यम्*—जोकि क्षत्रिय को युद्ध करने से अनायास ही अपने आप ही, *यदृच्छया*, मिल जाता है। अपयश ही इससे होता है।

अर्जुन को सही रास्ते पर लाने के लिये श्रीकृष्ण तीन मार्ग अपनाते हैं। पहला मार्ग है सांसारिकता का। जिस संसार में रहना है उस संसार की गतिविधि से व्यक्ति विमुख नहीं हो सकता। मान-अपमान, यश-अपयश इस संसार के धर्म हैं। श्रेष्ठ व्यक्ति मान चाहता है अपमान नहीं, यश चाहता है, अपयश नहीं। अर्जुन के युद्ध न करने से उसका अपयश ही होगा। अर्जुन डर के मारे युद्ध से भाग खड़ा हुआ यही

लोग कहते फिरेंगे—भयाद्रणादुपरतं मस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः।⁵ युगों-युगों तक उसका अपयश बना रहेगा, जोकि मृत्यु से भी बढ़ कर होगा।

दूसरा मार्ग जो श्री कृष्ण अपनाते हैं वह है—शरीर की नश्वरता का। शरीर को तो एक न एक दिन मरना ही है। मारने वाला समझता है कि मैं मार रहा हूँ जबकि स्थिति यह है कि उसका अन्त आ गया है। मारने वाला तो निमित्त बन जाता है मरने का—मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव। निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन्।⁶

तीसरा मार्ग है आत्मा की अमरता का। अर्जुन यह समझते ही क्यों है कि वे मार रहे हैं। कौन किसे मार रहा है—कंघातयति हन्ति कम्? क्यों अर्जुन अपराध बोध से ग्रस्त हुए जा रहे हैं। मैं कैसे भाई, चाचा, मामा, पितामह, गुरु—इन सबको मार सकूंगा। वह मार सकने की स्थिति में ही नहीं है। आत्मा तो अजर अमर है। शरीर के मारे जाने पर भी वह मर नहीं जाता है—न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे।⁸ हर प्राणी में दो तत्व हैं एक शरीर और दूसरा आत्मा। शरीर को मारने या न मारने का कोई अर्थ नहीं है क्योंकि उसने एक न एक दिन मरना ही है। आत्मा को मरना है ही नहीं। फिर मैं अमुक को मारता हूँ, इस कथन का अवकाश ही कहां है? जब अर्जुन किसी को मारने की स्थिति में ही नहीं तो उसे विषाद क्यों। क्यों नहीं वह शस्त्र उठा कर अपना कर्तव्य पूरा करता? यह है वह प्रकरण जहां गीता में आत्मा के अमरत्व की चर्चा आई है।

गीता कहती है, कि आत्मा अजन्मा, नित्य, शाश्वत, अति पुरातन है। शस्त्र इसे काटते नहीं, आग इसे जलाती नहीं, जल इसे गीला करता नहीं, वायु सुखाती नहीं। काटा यह जा नहीं सकता, जलाया जाना इसका सम्भव नहीं, गीला इसे किया नहीं जा सकता, सुखा इसे कोई सकता नहीं—

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः॥

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।

नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः॥⁹

यह नित्य है, सब जगह है, स्थिर है और सनातन (शाश्वत) है।

गीता में आत्मा के जिस स्वरूप का वर्णन किया है वह वही है जो उपनिषदों में भी मिलता है। और यह स्वभाविक ही है। गीता उपनिषदों का सार रूप ही है। एक प्राचीन श्लोक में कहा ही गया है—

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत्।

समस्त उपनिषद् गाय हैं, उनका दोहन करने वाले भगवान् गोपाल नन्दन है? अर्जुन बछड़ा है और दुग्ध गीता रूपी अमृत है।

गीता के प्रत्येक अध्याय की पुष्पिका में भी उपनिषदों को भगवान् के द्वारा गाया हुआ बताया गया है—श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु।

गीता के जिस श्लोक में आत्मा को अजन्मा, नित्य, शाश्वत एवं पुराण कहा है—

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे¹⁰

वह कठोपनिषद्¹¹ का ही है जहां कि वह ऐसा का ऐसा ही मिलता है।

इसी आत्मा को जानने के लिये, सुनने समझने के लिये और ध्यान करने के लिये उपनिषद् ने निर्देश किया है—आत्मा वाऽरे मन्तव्यः श्रोतव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः¹² आत्मबोध हो जाने पर व्यक्ति को कर्म लिप्त नहीं करता है—न कर्म लिप्यते नरे। उससे अलिप्त रह कर वह उसके बन्धन से मुक्त होगा, जिसके कारण उसे कर्मफल का भोग करने के लिए बार बार शरीर धारण करना पड़ता है। जब तक कर्म बन्धन रहेगा आत्मा शरीर धारण करता ही जाएगा। यदि एक शरीर पुराना पड़ जायगा तो वह दूसरा नया शरीर धारण करेगा, ठीक उसी प्रकार जिस प्रकार मनुष्य फटे पुराने वस्त्रों को त्याग कर नये धारण करता है—

वासासि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय

नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-

न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही।¹³

शरीर की तो यही स्थिति है। उसे तो पुराने कपड़ों की तरह बदले जाते ही रहना है। तो उसके जाने पर बिखलना क्या—तत्र का परिदेवना? अनश्वर के रहते नश्वर के पीछे क्या भटकना। जिसे बने ही रहना है, एक सार, एक समान, उसका बोध होने पर क्या मोह और क्या शोक? तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः?¹⁴

बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् में आत्मा के एक शरीर से दूसरे शरीर में अनुप्रवेश को एक अन्य अतीव सटीक उदाहरण से समझाया गया है। एक लूता, घास के एक तिनके पर चढ़ती जाती है जैसे ही वह उसके अन्त तक पहुंचती है तो झट से दूसरे तिनके पर चढ़ जाती है और उस पर चलने लगती है वही स्थिति है आत्मा की और शरीर की। तिनके बदलते रहते हैं लूता, , वहीं की वहीं रहती है शरीर बदलते रहते हैं, आत्मा वही की वही रहती है। वह तो सदा से है और सदा रहेगी ही। उसका जन्म और पुनर्जन्म नहीं है—नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः¹⁵ वह तो अज है, अजन्मा है। सदा था, सदा से है और सदा ही रहेगा।

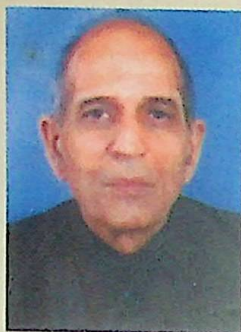
किसी भी जीव के सन्दर्भ में जब आत्मा की चर्चा की जाती है तो उससे तात्पर्य होता है जीवात्मा, individual self और परमात्मा, supreme self दोनों एक

ही हैं। असीम को जब सीमित कर देखा जाता है तो उसे अलग नाम दे दिया जाता है। जीव तक सीमित होने के कारण वह जीवात्मा कहलाता है। सीमा हट जाय तो वह असीम ही है। अलग अलग पात्रों में रखा जल, अमुक पात्र का जल, अमुक पात्र का जल कहलाता है। पात्रों के भेद के कारण ही जल का भेद कर लिया जाता है। अन्यथा जल तो जल ही है। इसी प्रकार जीवोपाध्यवच्छिन्न आत्मा जीवात्मा कहा जाता है। जीवोपाधि हटा देने पर आत्मा आत्मा ही है अनादि, अनन्त, अनश्वर। वह सब प्राणियों में है, सब प्राणी उसमें हैं—*सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानु पश्यति सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानम्*।¹⁶ उस विशाल, बृहद्, ब्रह्म का साक्षात्कार होने पर मनुष्य में और उसमें कोई पृथक्ता रह नहीं जाती। ब्रह्म को जानना और ब्रह्म बन जाना दोनों एक ही हैं—स यो ह वै ब्रह्मवेद ब्रह्मैव भवति।¹⁷

सन्दर्भ

1. गीता, 1.21
2. वही, 1.22
3. वही, 1.47
4. वही, 2.2
5. वही, 2.35
6. वही, 11.33
7. वही, 2.21
8. वही, 2.20
9. वही, 2.23-24
10. वही, 2.20
11. 1.2.18
12. बृहदारण्यकोपनिषद्, 1.4.5.6
13. गीता, 2.22
14. ईशोपनिषद्, 7
15. गीता, 2.20
16. ईशोपनिषद्, 6
17. मुण्डकोपनिषद्, 3.2.9

□ □ □



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Born on 29th September, 1930, Professor Satya Vrat Shastri had his early education under his father, Professor Charu Deva Shastri. He received record marks in B.A. Hons. in Sanskrit and a First Class First in M.A. in Sanskrit from the Punjab University, and won University Medals. After doing his Ph.D. at the Banaras Hindu University he joined the University of Delhi, where during the forty years of his teaching career he has held important positions as the Head of the Department of Sanskrit and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. He was also Vice-Chancellor of Shri Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri, Orissa. He has the distinction of having been visiting professor in five universities on three continents. He has attended and chaired a number of national and international conferences and seminars and delivered more than a hundred lectures in universities in Europe, North America, Southeast Asia and the Far East.

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